A Review of Eight Selected Dreams of Don Bosco

Ho Ka Fai

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DON BOSCO'S DREAMS: A PREFACE

by Father Michael Mendl, SDB

1. Don Bosco's Dreams

Saint John Bosco may be the most famous dreamer since the two biblical Josephs, the Israelite patriarch (Genesis 37, 39-48, 50) and the spouse of the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1-2). His dreams are one factor in the fascination that he held among his contemporaries and still holds for modern Christians. He was able to make amazing predictions of the future of individuals and to display strikingly accurate knowledge of consciences. His dreams were prophetic in the broad sense of "revealing something of God and his truth."

By one count the *Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*[1] reports 153 dreams that the Saint wrote down, narrated, or merely mentioned. Don Bosco's biographers, like his immediate listeners, generally take for granted that most of these dreams, if not all of them, were more than ordinary.

The sources for those 153 dreams include Don Bosco's written accounts, the chronicles of the first Salesians,[2] the notes, memoirs, and testimony of various contemporaries, and many conversations with his future biographer Father John Baptist Lemoyne. Don Bosco wrote down two dreams at some length and alluded to four others in his own *Memoirs of the Oratory*.[3] He wrote out or had a secretary transcribe ten others, basically as memoranda for their future narration or for their

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[1] Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, Angelo Amadei, and Eugenio Ceria, *Memorie biografiche di S. Giovanni Bosco*, 20 vols. (S. Benigno Canavese and Turin: SEI, 1898-1948). Eng. trans.: *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, ed. Diego Borgatello, SDB (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1964-2003) in 19 volumes (without a separate index volume). Abbreviated below as BM.

[2] The principal chronicles and diaries are those of three early Salesians who were leaders in the nascent Salesian Society: Frs. John Bonetti (1838-1891), Dominic Ruffino (1840-1865), and Julius Barberis (1847-1927); and of two of Don Bosco's personal secretaries, Frs. Joachim Berto (1847-1914) and Charles Viglietti (1864-1915).

[3] *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855*, trans. Daniel Lyons (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1989). Paperback edition without commentary, re-issued by Salesiana Publishers (New Rochelle) in 2024. The 1989 edition is cited in this essay.

communication to those for whom they were meant.[4] That means, obviously, that the great majority have come to us based on their oral narration. Often he would narrate them to all the Oratory residents, sometimes just to some of the Salesians. Whenever Don Bosco related his dreams, they utterly fascinated his listeners; not only was there usually an interesting story line—and Don Bosco was a captivating storyteller—but from experience they also knew that these dreams revealed truths about themselves or about the future. There were, of course, no tape recorders. Several of the first Salesians and other witnesses made it their business to write down afterward what Don Bosco had said.[5]

John was about nine when he experienced his first extraordinary dream. This most important dream set the course for his whole life. He tells us of it in his autobiographical *Memoirs of the Oratory*.[6] Father Albert Ka-fai Ho treats it in Chapter 2 of this book.

John realized this was no ordinary dream, even if he did not understand it. Yet he was quite skeptical about it: "I wasted no time in telling [my family] all about my dream.... Each one gave his own interpretation.... But my grandmother, though she could not read or write, knew enough theology and made the final judgement, saying '*Pay no attention to dreams*.' I agreed with my grandmother."[7]

But he could not forget the dream. With variations it apparently recurred in subsequent years and was followed by others that seemed to point out his calling from God or the future of his work. He remained skeptical until his mentor, Saint Joseph Cafasso, advised him, around 1846: "Go ahead. You may quite safely give special

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[4] Cecilia Romero, a Salesian sister, presents a critical edition these ten in *I sogni di Don Bosco* (Turin: LDC, 1978). These are either Don Bosco's own manuscripts or manuscripts by others that he annotated. Fr. Ho discusses six of these that concern the Salesian Society in Chapters 4-9. The other four concern European events and rulers or Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII.

[5] For the formation and activity of the "historical committee" of 1861, see BM 6:505-07.

[6] *Memoirs of the Oratory*, pp. 18-19.

[7] Ibid., pp. 19-20. Italics in the original.

significance to these dreams. I am convinced they are for God's greater glory and the welfare of souls."[8]

In allegorical form Don Bosco's dreams

> enabled him to perceive hidden facts or future events: sometimes in general terms, sometimes in very specific terms; sometimes with a feeling of certainty about the meaning of symbols, sometimes uncertain about his own interpretive capabilities. Don Bosco then waited to see how things would turn out in reality. He, like others, waited for verification of something that had seemed to him to be a prophecy but that he chose out of prudence to present merely as a parable.[9]

2. *The Biographical Memoirs*: Value and Limitations

Except for those few dreams of which critical editions have been published, we must either have recourse to the primary sources preserved in the Salesian Central Archives in Rome,[10] or must rely upon the edited texts provided by Father Lemoyne. Lemoyne was not a historian and did not use a historian's methods in gathering and ordering his material and assessing the value of his sources. He confessed: "Some passages will have to be judged critically, especially those where Don Bosco relates his own experiences or dreams, or predictions of the future; for it appears that his humility has imparted to them a certain slant; or they may not have been rightly understood by those who kept a record or memory of them." Immediately he adds a qualification concerning himself: "For my part, I recorded faithfully what many boys, priests and clerics of the Oratory handed down in writing, and what I myself saw or heard from Don Bosco's own lips."[11]

Lemoyne himself hints at his working method and gives an example of his penchant for interpretation at the end of his account of the dream "To Hell and Back"

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[8] BM 2:322.

[9] Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco: Religious Outlook and Spirituality*, trans. John Drury (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1996), pp. 512-13.

[10] Salesian Central Archives (ASC) 111, published on microfiche: *Fondo Don Bosco*, 1254 E5 to 1347 D3. A complete set of the *Fondo* is available in the United States at the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkeley, Calif.

[11] *Documenti*, vol. 1, 1, cited and translated by Arthur J. Lenti, "Don Bosco's Boswell: John Baptist Lemoyne—The Man and His Work," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 1 (1990), no. 2, p. 30.

as, he says, Don Bosco told it to the Oratory community on May 3, 1868:

> Later, he narrated this dream in a condensed form to the boys of our schools in Mirabello and Lanzo. In the retelling he introduced variations but made no substantial changes. Likewise, when he spoke of it privately to Salesian priests and clerics, with whom he enjoyed greater familiarity, he would add new particulars. Occasionally he omitted details when talking to some people, while revealing them to others. Concerning the devil's traps, while discussing bad habits, he elaborated on the devil's tactics for luring victims to hell. Of many scenes he offered no explanation. For instance, he said nothing about the majestic figures he saw in that magnificent hall, which we are inclined to call "the treasure house of God's mercy for saving boys who would otherwise perish." Were these persons perhaps the principal dispensers of countless graces?
>
> Some variations in his narration stemmed from the multiplicity of simultaneous scenes. As they flashed back into his mind, he would select what he considered most suited to his audience. After all, meditating on the four last things was a habit with him. Such meditation kindled a most lively compassion in his heart for all sinners threatened by such a frightful eternity. This ardent charity helped him overcome any reticence as he prudently but frankly invited even very prominent people to mend their ways. It also made his words so effective as to work many conversions.[12]

This method of redaction and interpretation he applied throughout his nine volumes.

3. Studying Don Bosco's Dreams

When Don Bosco's secretary Father Joachim Berto had difficulty remembering the details of one dream that he wished to write down, he asked Don Bosco how he could possibly remember all the boys he had seen therein and the specific state of conscience of each, and how Don Bosco had given an evasive reply. Father Eugene Ceria's account in *The Biographical Memoirs* continues:

> When Father Barberis also broached the same subject, Don Bosco answered gravely, "It was a great deal more than a dream"; and cutting the talk short, he passed on to other things.
>
> Father Berto ends his report with these words: "I, too, the writer of this report, asked him about my part in this dream. His answer was so much to the point that I burst into tears and said, 'An angel from heaven could not have hit the truth better.'"[13]

Berto's testimony shows us that something more than memory alone was at work in Don Bosco when he recalled the salient points of what he had seen.

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[12] BM 9:99-100.
[13] BM 11:244.

Beyond the text of a dream, one must also look into its context. When Don Bosco went to bed, what was on his mind? What personages, problems, current events, ideas, images, language, etc., might already have been lurking in his subconscious. Father Pietro Stella has suggested that the Saint's fundamental first dream at age nine or ten[14] might have occurred shortly after the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, when John would likely have heard a sermon or catechism lesson on the Pope as the chief shepherd of Christ's flock, an image that might in turn have fed the graphic imagery of his dream. We know that when he dreamed his long "missionary tour" of South America in 1883 (Father Ho's Chapter 8) and asked his guide, "When will we go to Boston?", he had on his desk a request to send Salesians to staff the French-language church in that city. It is no difficulty at all to relate certain dreams to specific political events of the day or to sites that the Saint was familiar with. His study of the sacred Scriptures and his use of them in his preaching and catechesis are reflected in countless biblical allusions within his dreams.

The student of Don Bosco's dreams must consider their contents. Their theology (ecclesiology, Mariology, Christology, morals, pastoral practice) echoes what he had learned in his seminary training, what he was reading, what he was doing as a priest in nineteenth-century Italy. The imagery, scenes, plots, and persons may reflect at one juncture theological issues; at another, daily commonplaces; at a third, childhood remembrances.[15]

When a dream seems to deal with predictions or visions of the future, one must determine carefully exactly what was foreseen and how it may or may not have been fulfilled. The language employed "is often stereotyped, indefinite and highly

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[14] Don Bosco is vague about the dating, at different times giving differing ages.
[15] Arthur J. Lenti, "Methodological Points for a Critical Study of a Dream of DB," class notes at the Institute for Salesian Studies, Berkeley, Calif., 1986, p. 2.

symbolic." Sometimes the prophecy is conditional, whether or not that is explicitly stated.[16]

As for the meaning of his dreams, so prudent was this friend of the young that he often cautioned his auditors not to take his dreams too seriously. For example, on one occasion in 1876 he prefaced a narration thus:

> I will tell things just as I saw them and let each one take what pertains to him. Before I begin, just remember that dreams happen during sleep when we have no control over our minds. If you find anything good in this dream, a warning or anything at all, take heed, but do not become ill at ease because of it. I said that I dreamed while I was sleeping because some boys dream while they are awake, much to their teachers' annoyance.[17]

He could even be funny about what he was relating to his beloved boys: "I tell you everything I know, and even, sometimes, things I don't know."[18]

How did Don Bosco himself regard his dreams and how did the people around him regard what he related to them? Sometimes he was convinced that God or the Virgin Mary was communicating with him. At other times he passed off his remarks as "a parable." The early Salesians and the pupils seem to have been less discerning. They "lived in the expectation of the extraordinary and in a climate 'of legend', and were therefore prone to accept more readily a 'supernatural' interpretation."[19]

Father Albert Caviglia, a highly respected Salesian scholar, wrote: "A good number [of the dreams] may be regarded simply as edifying and didactic parables. They are an attempt to express symbolically ideas, tendencies, hopes that were part of Don Bosco's spiritual and educational world."[20] One of his best known "dreams," the

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[16] Arthur J. Lenti, "Introductory Essay" to the first edition of *Dreams, Visions and Prophecies of Don Bosco*, ed. Eugene M. Brown (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1986), p. xlviii.
[17] BM 12:29.
[18] BM 12:432, which notes that his audience laughed.
[19] Lenti, "Methodological Points," p. 1.
[20] *Don Bosco* (Turin: LICE, 1934), p. 35. Fr. Caviglia (1868-1943) was, especially, a master of Salesian spirituality. He was the first to undertake a critical study of Don Bosco's major writings, eventually published in 6 volumes as *Opere e scritti editi e inediti di "Don Bosco"* (Turin, 1929-1964); vols. 5-6 were posthumous; his premature death scuttled the project.

so-called "Dream of the Two Columns," he presented as a fable, according to the primary sources, although Lemoyne ignored that in *The Biographical Memoirs*. Caviglia also opined, "How many predictions and revelations of hidden things are credited to Don Bosco that were nothing else but perceptions (keen and clever, if you will) achieved through observation!"[21] It is, however, difficult to sort out didactic parables from authentic dreams.

Inquiries might lead a psychologist or an expert in the science of dreams to be able to distinguish in Don Bosco's experience between an ordinary dream suggested by perfectly normal factors of the day and with no unusual content (as ordinary dreams go), and a dream or vision of a supernatural character, of a revelatory nature. Of course, one comes quickly up against facts presented in certain dreams—most notably, accurate predictions of the future, or knowledge about persons he had never met or about long buried secrets—that could not possibly have been suggested by even such an astute observer of life as Don Bosco.

Beyond trying to understand what was going on in Don Bosco's head, one needs to take into account how it affected his other senses. At the end of his dream-trip to the outer walls of hell, his guide

> seized my hand, forced it open, and pressed it against the first of the thousand walls. The sensation was so utterly excruciating that I leaped back with a scream and found myself sitting up in bed. My hand was stinging, and I kept rubbing it to ease the pain. When I got up that morning I noticed that it was swollen. Having my hand pressed against the wall, though only in a dream, felt so real that, later, the skin of my palm peeled off.[22]

In the Dominic Savio dream at Lanzo (Father Ho's Chapter 4), the long-deceased pupil gave him a note with a list of the students in mortal sin.

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[21] "Il 'Magone Michele': Una classica esperienza educativa," in *Salesianum* 11 (1949), 592; Lenti's translation. But the Saint also demonstrated perceptive powers that were far from natural, and at times claimed as much. E.g.: "Show me a young man who is a total stranger to me, and I will look him straight in the eye and divine his sins, beginning with those committed in his earliest youth" (Lemoyne, *Vita di San Giovanni Bosco*, rev. Angelo Amadei [Turin: SEI, 1939], 2:429; Lenti's translation.).
[22] BM 9:99.

> As I opened that note, an unbearable stench emanated from it. An atrocious headache immediately seized me, and I felt so sick to my stomach that I thought I would die. . . . That stench penetrated the very walls and got into all my clothing, so much so that for days afterward I could still detect its foulness. Even the name of the sinner is truly foul in God's eyes. Even now, no sooner do I recall that stench than I begin to shudder and choke, and my stomach turns over with retching.[23]

It appears that more than imagination is at work here. Ceria argued that many of the Salesian Founder's dreams were, evidently, divine revelations: "from the fact that they show a logical and purposeful plan and development (which is not the case in common dreams); from the fact that the predictions contained in them were later fulfilled; from the fact of knowledge transcending human insight; and from the fact that Don Bosco himself attached great importance to these dreams, was guided by them, and did not object when the word 'vision' was used to describe them."[24]

After identifying certain "dreams" as fables invented for didactic purposes, other "visions" as instances of unusually keen human perception, the ordinary reader and the critical scholar alike will be left with a great many of Don Bosco's experiences that defy rational explanation and will be left to wonder whether the finger of God is at work here,[25] if not actually to affirm it.

4. Purposes and Value of the Dreams

The reader may wonder what value Don Bosco's dreams hold.

In the first place, although initially skeptical of them, as he discussed with Father Cafasso, the Saint himself thought they had great value. He believed it was his duty to pass along what he heard and saw. On one occasion, he explained to the assembled students and Salesians:

> I realized that God willed I should reveal what I had seen. For this reason, and to rid myself of these nightmares, I have decided to tell you everything. Let us

[23] BM 12:441.
[24] Lenti, "Introductory Essay," p. xlv.
[25] Ibid., p. l.

> thank the Lord for his mercy. Meanwhile, let us strive to carry out his admonitions, no matter what way he may choose to make them known to us, and let us use the means he sends to enable us to save our souls. . . . Well then, here are the dreams which I would rather forget but must reveal.[26]

His biographer states, "In narrating to his boys his various dreams…, Don Bosco told them only what was best for them, since this was the intent of Him who gave these mysterious revelations."[27] Passing along the messages he received in the night was for the Apostle of the Young just one more means of seeking souls. "These dreams," he told Father Julius Barberis,

> help a lot, and the boys are eager to hear them. My only trouble is that I need lungs of steel.[28] Truthfully, these dreams do shake people up because almost always they touch everybody, and each one asks in what condition I saw him, what he is to do, and how he should understand the different facets of the dream. They pester me day and night. All I need do to urge them to make a general confession is tell them one of my dreams.[29]

In the second place, these dreams are indispensable for understanding Saint John Bosco. While they do not tell us everything there is to know and grasp about him—far from it!—they are part and parcel of who he was as an apostle, a founder, a spiritual guide. In purely exterior terms, they are part of the historical record, part of his life, and merit inclusion in any account of it. In interior terms, these texts—individually, and all the more in their sheer volume—offer us priceless insights into the psyche of a spiritual and apostolic giant of the nineteenth century. Since Don Bosco was not otherwise much given to self-revelation—he has left us no *Confessions*, no *Story of a Soul*, no *Seven Storey Mountain*—his dreams may be the closest we can come to knowing the innermost soul of the man. For Don Bosco, his dreams are mystical experiences revelatory of his inner life and his relationship with God. His

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[26] BM 9:76.
[27] BM 6:518-19.
[28] Probably meaning that by this time—when he was past 60 years of age—he found it difficult to make himself heard for the long periods required by his narratives, addressing a crowd of 600 or 700 men and boys without a microphone.
[29] BM 12:28.

all-consuming hunger for souls many times is explicit; in at least one instance, the Salesian motto is echoed to him: "Tell your boys to save their souls because that's all that matters. The rest counts for nothing."[30]

In view of the Saint's reticence about his own interior life, "his dreams, read in continuity and conjunction with his writings and recorded words of the same period [as a given dream], constitute a valuable source for study and an understanding of his life and work."[31]

In the third place, his dreams are an element of Don Bosco's pedagogy. Some, like the one when he was about nine years old, point out qualities that he must develop in himself and present to him those who can teach him. Others point out the virtues to be instilled in the young or, like the dream written up in the crucial Letter of 1884 from Rome, the method to be used in educating the young. Finally, a whole class of dreams aimed to prepare people to die "a happy death."

In the fourth place, many of these dreams have a moral value also for the modern reader, as much as for the boys of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales. Love for virtue and hatred for sin; the four last things; the role of the Mother of God in the life of the Christian; the spiritual power of the Holy Eucharist—these are timeless matters.

But as we read Don Bosco's dreams a century and a half later, we have to keep them in their own context. With only a handful of exceptions, Don Bosco's dreams concerned his boys and his Salesians. He usually encouraged his listeners to discuss among themselves his words and their meaning as much as they wanted, yet very often he explicitly cautioned them not to repeat what he was about to say to anyone outside the house; outsiders did not know the intimate, fatherly atmosphere that reigned in the Salesian family, might misinterpret his words, might hold the Oratory

[30] BM 12:370.
[31] Lenti, "Introductory Essay," p. xlii.

up to ridicule. For example, at the end of "Hiking to Heaven" in 1861, he cautioned: "Don't tell [this dream] to outsiders, because they would only make fun of it. I tell you these things just to please you. Talk about this dream among yourselves all you want, but remember that it is only a dream."[32]

The type of dream did not seem to matter: whether he was predicting that some pupil would die before a certain date or was telling of some mystical journey with his beloved sons that somehow revealed their hearts, these dreams were "not for external consumption." Hence if we seek to interpret what Don Bosco says, our interpretations must look to his context, the Oratory-Salesian context of 1841-1888, and not to our own time and place. Having discerned his spiritual message for his time and place in its general terms, we may apply it to ourselves, again in general terms.

Some readers have attempted to turn Don Bosco into a twentieth- or twenty-first-century prophet. But we find in his words and writings no specific "prophecies" for persons or events beyond his own time, except for individuals to whom he personally revealed their individual futures and a very few predictions concerning religious congregations, and for some generalities applied to the Salesian Congregation, as for example in the dream of the Ten Diamonds at San Benigno[33] and in the missionary dreams. A vague prediction concerning a great triumph of the Madonna sometime in the twentieth century is so poorly attested as to be questionable.[34]

A caution from the Saint himself is in order, therefore. As he was warning the students of the Oratory and the Salesian confreres to keep among themselves the dream at Lanzo in which Dominic Savio figured so prominently, he said:

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[32] BM 6:517-18.
[33] BM 15:147-52. See Fr. Ho's Chapter 6.
[34] BM 9:276.

...

> Dreams are to be given the importance they deserve. Those who do not know how close we are to each other might well misjudge the whole thing. . . . Whatever a father tells his beloved sons for their own good should stay between them and go no further. There is another reason, too. If the dream were to be told to outsiders, more often than not the facts could be twisted or presented out of context. This could be harmful and lead people to regard as worthless what, instead, is important.[35]

From the perspective of 1876 (the date of that dream), we reading it now—as well as any of the other dreams—are "outsiders." We are not in the Oratory at that time. We run the risk of taking the facts out of context and twisting them, emphasizing what is trivial and passing over "as worthless what, instead, is important": for example, if we were to be more concerned about the nature of heaven than about Savio's advice on how to get there.

Father Lenti highlights the interrelationship between our Saint's dreams and his life. His dreams, writes Lenti,

> yield valuable insights into Don Bosco's spiritual life, his educational and apostolic experiences and concerns, his fears and hopes for Church and society, and generally his thought and convictions. . . . His dreams, read in continuity and in conjunction with his writings and recorded words of the same period, constitute a valuable source for a study and an understanding of his life and work.[36]

In other words, his dreams illuminate his life, spirituality, and apostolate; likewise, the dreams are to be interpreted only in the light of his life, spirituality, and apostolate.

4. Types of Dreams

We may distinguish between visions, dreams, and parables in Don Bosco's life. Several times, at least, he experienced visions or trances of a revelatory character while fully awake, as when Louis Colle appeared to him on several occasions.[37] Somehow he was able at times to know the soul of a person in his presence—a phenomenon that caused some Oratory boys with guilty consciences to try to shield

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[35] BM 12:432.
[36] "Introductory Essay," p. xlii. Also to be consulted on this topic is Ceria's preface to the *Memorie biografiche*, vol. 17.
[37] BM 15: 61-70.

their foreheads from him if they saw him coming.[38] In the vast majority of cases, the Saint tells us in the course of narration that he had gone to bed and begun to dream, and at the end he woke up. In a few instances he expresses his uncertainty about whether he was awake or asleep.[39] Finally, there are the parables, mentioned above.

In his preliminary study, Stella points out several ways in which the dreams could be classified:[40]

1. Many dreams concern Don Bosco himself and his mission. Also grouped here might be those concerning deaths, individual or group conduct, and the development of the Salesian Society.

2. Some dreams are of a "public" nature, concerning local or general political or religious events.

3. One could discern between dreams in which Don Bosco himself is the principal actor, and those in which some noble personage (named or not) takes the lead.

4. Many dreams are loaded with imagery, offering the possibility of dividing dreams into those about rural, domestic, or civic life. The imagery may be of the Piedmontese countryside or of the Oratory and its ambience.

5. The dreams could be classed according to whether or not there is written documentation, and among those for which there is, by whether the documentation originates with one or more of the persons who heard Don Bosco narrate them, or with Don Bosco himself.

6. The dreams could be grouped concerning what they revealed: past or present hidden facts or future events.

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[38] Deposition of Fr. Ascanio Savio during the canonical process, as cited by BM 4:213; he frequented the Oratory in the early 1850s.

[39] E.g., concerning the Lanzo dream of Dominic Savio: "During the night hours of December 6, while I was in my room—whether reading or pacing back and forth or resting in bed, I am not sure—I began dreaming" (BM 12:432).

[40] Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco's Dreams: A Historico-documentary Analysis of Selected Samples*, trans. John Drury (New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1996), pp. 3-4.

7. Finally, one could consider Don Bosco's state of mind at the time of particular dreams: calmness, euphoria, depression, anxiety, etc.

Lenti, also, demonstrates several ways in which the dreams might be categorized:[41]

1. By content: vocation dreams, educational dreams, prophetic warnings; dreams about the Salesian Society; dreams of a composite type.

2. By the authority of the text and tradition: manuscript written by or reviewed by Don Bosco himself; reports by auditors, written soon after the dream's oral narration; some few dreams "for which there is extant no early report."

Published collections of Don Bosco's dreams sometimes divide them into categories regarding their subject matter; e.g., his personal mission and that of the Salesian Society, future events, the Oratory boys, and the afterlife. Father Angelo Amadei categorized the Saint's "visions" of 1871-1874 into predictions of death, revelations of consciences, catechetical illustrations, a description of the Salesians' first mission field, and dreams concerning public events.[42]

Dreams about himself guided John Bosco's vocation, e.g., the decisive first dream and one during his late teen years that warned against entering a certain Franciscan monastery. Those about his mission and the Salesians pointed out future steps (e.g., the site of his work in Turin; the kind of candidates to admit) or the development of the Society in various places (e.g., the foreign missions) or advice about the Society's guidance (e.g., virtues to be cultivated and vices to be avoided; the practice of the Preventive System at the Oratory). Dreams of future events concerned affairs both public and private. For instance, concerning public affairs, late in 1854, when Piedmont was about to pass a law suppressing monastic orders, on the basis of a

[41] "Introductory Essay," pp. xlvi-vii.
[42] BM 10:34-35.

dream Don Bosco predicted “great funerals at court,” fulfilled amply within weeks. Concerning private affairs there was, for example, a vision of the unexpected recovery of John Cagliero, about to die from typhoid, and his future as a missionary bishop—realized thirty years later—and there were dreams of the deaths of various pupils. Other dreams revealed to him the states of conscience of his boys, sometimes in symbolic form and sometimes quite explicitly, and still others allegorically promoted the sacraments, virtue, or devotion to Mary. Finally, those about heaven, often featuring a venerated personage like Dominic Savio, presented the beauty and glory of the reward destined by God for the faithful, while those about hell attempted to instill a disgust and horror for sin and its consequences.

However one divides up or categorizes Saint John Bosco’s dreams, visions, and prophecies, they never fail to fascinate the student of spirituality or of the human mind, and they always offer moral and religious instruction.

Abbreviations used in the notes

BM Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. Edited by Diego Borgatello. Vol. 1-9. New Rochelle, NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-1975.

Eugenio Ceria. *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. Edited by Diego Borgatello. Vol. 11-19. New Rochelle, NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1964-2003.

References are by volume and page.

C *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales*. Roma: S.D.B., 1984.

References are by code number.

DBLW Pietro Stella. *Don Bosco: Life and Work.* Translated by John Drury. New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, 2005.

DBHS Arthur J Lenti. *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*. Edited by Aldo Giraudo. Vol. 1-7. Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2007-2010.

References are by volume and page.

MO John Bosco. *Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis De Sales from 1815 to 1855: The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco*. Translated by Daniel Lyons. New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1989.

R *General Regulations of the Society of St Francis de Sales*. Roma: S.D.B., 1984.

References are by code number.

Biblical Abbreviations

Old Testament

Genesis	Gn	Nehemiah	Ne	Baruch	Ba
Exodus	Ex	Tobit	Tb	Ezekiel	Ezk
Leviticus	Lv	Judith	Jdt	Daniel	Dn
Numbers	Nb	Esther	Est	Hosea	Ho
Deuteronomy	Dt	1 Maccabees	1 M	Joel	Jl
Joshua	Jos	2 Maccabees	2 M	Amos	Am
Judges	Jg	Job	Jb	Obadiah	Ob
Ruth	Rt	Psalms	Ps	Jonah	Jon
1 Samuel	1 S	Proverbs	Pr	Micah	Mi
2 Samuel	2 S	Ecclesiastes	Ec	Nahum	Na
1 Kings	1 K	Song of Songs	Sg	Habakkuk	Hab
2 Kings	2 K	Wisdom	Ws	Zephaniah	Zp
1 Chronicles	1 Ch	Sirach	Si	Haggai	Hg
2 Chronicles	2 Ch	Isaiah	Is	Malachi	Ml
Ezra	Ezr	Jeremiah	Jr	Zechariah	Zc
		Lamentations	Lm		

New Testament

Matthew	Mt	Ephesians	Eph	Hebrews	Heb
Mark	Mk	Philippians	Ph	James	Jm
Luke	Lk	Colossians	Col	1 Peter	1 P
John	Jn	1 Thessalonians	1 Th	2 Peter	2 P
Acts	Ac	2 Thessalonians	2 Th	1 John	1 Jn
Romans	Rm	1 Timothy	1 Tm	2 John	2 Jn
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	2 Timothy	2 Tm	3 John	3 Jn
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	Titus	Tt	Jude	Jude
Galatians	Gal	Philemon	Phm	Revelation	Rv

1. Introduction

1.1 Don Bosco's Life, Works, and Dreams

St. John Bosco (1815–1888) was a Catholic priest in Turin, in northern Italy. His full name was John Melchior Bosco. He was the son of Francis Louis and Margaret Occhiena Bosco, who were farmers in Becchi on the farm of Biglione.[1]

From 1841 to 1844, Don Bosco pursued advanced studies in priestly education at the Pastoral Institute (Convitto) in Turin.[2] During a pastoral visit to a prison, he experienced a deeply moving encounter with a large group of youths aged 12 to 18 who had returned to prison just days after their release. These young people seemed completely abandoned by society. Reflecting on this, Don Bosco remarked:

> If these youngsters had a friend on the outside who would take care of them, help them, teach them religion on feast days ... Who knows but they could be steered away from ruin, or at least the number of those who returned to prison could be lessened.[3]

This experience inspired him to establish a festive oratory in 1841 to meet the needs of young seasonal workers from the countryside.[4] This initiative is widely regarded as the beginning of Don Bosco's charism and spirituality, deeply rooted in serving society's most vulnerable members.

To build upon his pastoral work, Don Bosco founded the Salesian Society, officially approved by Pope Blessed Pius IX in 1869.[5] Additionally, he established the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters) in 1872 and the Association

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[1] DBHS, vol. 1, 38.

[2] MO, 180-182.

[3] *Ibid.*, 182.

[4] DBLW, 114.

[5] MO, 442.

of Salesian Cooperators in 1876.[6] The mission of St. John Bosco and the organizations he founded has always been to serve youth, particularly the poor and marginalized. Dedicated to the virtues of patience and gentleness,[7] the Salesian Society was placed under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales. Its motto, *"Da Mihi Animas, Caetera Tolle"* ("Give me souls, take away the rest"), captures its spirit and mission.[8]

Through the Salesian Society, Don Bosco promoted and implemented an effective preventive system of education based on his pastoral experiences. He outlined this system in his booklet *Regolamento per le case della Societa de S. Francesco di Sales*, which provides a detailed explanation of the preventive approach to education tailored to the needs of young people.[9]

The culmination of Don Bosco's life and works led to his canonization on April 1, 1934.[10] In 1989, Pope St. John Paul II declared and proclaimed him the "Father and Teacher of Youth".[11]

In considering an introduction to the life and work of Don Bosco, we cannot neglect reviewing his dreams, their meanings, and their impact on his ministry. His dream experiences cover sixty of the seventy-three years of his life.[12] In total, 153

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, 217.

[8] BM, vol. 5, 81.

[9] Pietro Braido, "Prevention Not Repression, Don Bosco's Educational System," Salesians Don Bosco, 2021, accessed 12 October 2021. https://www.sdb.org/en/Educational_System/Preventive_System/Documents/Prevention_not_Repression__Don_Bosco__s_Educational_System_b.

[10] Salesians Don Bosco, "The Young People's Priest," Salesians Don Bosco, 2021, accessed 28 September 2021, https://www.sdb.org/en/Don_Bosco/Don_Bosco/The_Priest_of_Young_People.

[11] John Paul II, "Lettera a Don Egidio Viganò, Rettore Maggiore Della Società Salesiana Di San Giovanni Bosco (24 Gennaio 1989): Giovanni Paolo II," The Holy See, January 23, 1989, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/letters/1989/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19890124_vigano.html.

[12] BM, vol. 1, 190.

dreams are recorded in the nineteen volumes of *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*. Don Bosco's recorded dreams are categorized based on their sources into three groups: First, dreams Don Bosco reported himself in his autobiography. Second, ten dreams recorded by early Salesians, later reviewed and scrutinized by Don Bosco himself. Third, dreams recorded by Salesians that were not later reviewed or edited by the founder. All these autobiographical writings and related annotated material can be found in the Central Salesian Archives in Rome.[13] Don Bosco's dreams may also be categorized by their content and function: vocational dreams, educational dreams, prophetic warnings, and dreams about the Society of St. Francis de Sales (the Salesian Society).[14]

Regarding the three categories of recorded sources, the first two categories (dreams self-reported by Don Bosco and those later scrutinized by him) include 12 dreams and hold greater academic value for understanding the development of the Salesian Society and the Salesians.[15] Among these, 8 dreams directly concern the Salesian Society and its mission. Therefore, the present study will focus exclusively on these dreams.[16]

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[13] Arthur J. Lenti, "Introductory Essay," in *Dreams, Visions & Prophecies of Don Bosco*, ed. Eugene M. Brown (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1986), xlvi-xlvii.

[14] *Ibid.*, xlvi.

[15] The first two of these dreams were recorded by Don Bosco in his autobiographical memoirs: The First Dream when he was nine years old in 1824 or 1825, and Another Dream in 1844. The remaining ten dreams were recorded by the early Salesians, and were reviewed and corrected by Don Bosco, they are: the Prophecy in 1870, the Message to Pius IX in 1873, the Message to the Emperor of Austria in 1873, the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, the Message to Leo XIII in 1878, the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881, the Provera Dream in 1883, the Dream about the South American Missions in 1883, and the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887.

[16] The Prophecy in 1870, the Message to Pius IX in 1873, the Message to the Emperor of Austria in 1873, and the Message to Leo XIII in 1878, these four dreams are excluded in this study since they are not directly related to the Salesian Society and the Salesians.

Cf. Michael Ribotta, "The Roman Letter of 1884 And Its Aftermath," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 5, no. 2 (1994): 1-21. The Roman Letter of 1884 of Don Bosco is treated by the Salesian scholars as one of the important references in order to understand the preventive system of Don Bosco and the notion of an exemplary Salesian. This letter that includes a dream should be counted as a theoretical sampling of

Since Don Bosco's dreams played a significant role in guiding his life and works, it is worthwhile to attempt to understand how God communicated with him through these dreams. They serve to animate his vocation, sanctify him, and assist in resolving the contingencies of his life in the fulfillment of God's Will.[17] Reflecting on these dreams may help to better understand and nurture the spiritual growth of members of the Salesian family in their pursuit of spiritual perfection. Furthermore, they may also provide significant benefits to the spirituality of the faithful.

1.2 Methodology

In order to scrutinize Don Bosco's dreams, this section elaborates on a methodology for analyzing spiritual theology in association with Morton Kelsey's Christian interpretation of dreams. This methodology is explained in terms of how it can be applied to the interpretation of these dreams. Kelsey's theory enhances awareness of the inner lives of humans and offers practical guidance for opening oneself to a deeper relationship with God. Furthermore, he integrates the insights of

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this present research in response to the classical value of the preventive system of Don Bosco in that letter, Moreover, Michael Ribotta shared an interesting story regarding this Roman Letter.

In 1884, May, Don Bosco was in Rome and intended to write a letter to the oratory in Valdocco. After carefully perusing the text of that letter and making occasional emendations, Don Bosco instructed his secretary to send the finished draft in letter form posthaste to Turin so that Don Rua could read it in public to the Oratory community. Earlier Father Lemoyne had written to Don Rua alerting him about Don Bosco's dream, a description of which he would receive shortly. He then expressed Don Bosco's desire to have the dream-letter read to the assembly of the Oratory community after evening prayers. Although it was the abridged version of the Roman letter that first received public attention, it however quickly disappeared from sight. For years it lay virtually unnoticed in the Salesian archives in Turin. In tracing its origin and eventual destination Pietro Braido has written: "The Roman letter of 1884 has had a rather precarious existence, going from occasional recognition to frequent periods of oblivion."

For more than three decades it endured a benign neglect. Coincidentally, excerpts of the shorter version of the Roman letter have since been discovered in the notebooks some of the early Salesian novices. Portions of it were also found among the papers of the first Salesian directors of novices, Fathers Giulio Barberis and Eugenio Bianchi. Finally in 1920 the then superior general, Father Paul Albera brought it to the attention of the Salesian world by publishing it as an official document in the *Atti del Capitolo Superiore della Pia Societa Salesiana* (June 24, 1920).

Based on the story recounted above, the Roman Letter is likely not counted by the Salesian scholars as belonging to either the first or the second category of Don Bosco's dreams as highlighted in the text. Therefore, by following the practice of the Salesian scholars, we do not count the Roman Letter of 1884 as a theoretical sampling in this present research.

[17] BM, vol. 17, xi-xii.

depth psychology with the traditional teachings of the Church Fathers and early Christian writers on devotional life.[18]

This integration enables deeper exploration of the spiritual meanings of dreams for paying attention to the inner images and voices that arise from the depths of our being.[19] Through the inspiration of Don Bosco's dreams, we may strive to emulate his example of confronting life's contingencies in alignment with the Divine will.

1.2.1 A Study in Spiritual Theology

Spiritual theology is a discipline that involves theological reflection based on Sacred Scripture and Tradition. It examines the spiritual writings and teachings of saints, draws insight from Christian experiences recognized by the Church as exemplary for the faithful, and offers rational elaborations of Divine Revelation.[20] Don Bosco's dreams can clearly be regarded as Christian experiences and serve as appropriate theoretical examples for a specific study in spiritual theology.

Spiritual theology explores the organic structure of spiritual life, which includes God's grace, the practice of virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.[21] This structure highlights the cooperative relationship between human freedom and God's grace, as individuals strive toward spiritual perfection.[22] As stated in the Gospel of Matthew:

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[18] Diane E. Bunker, "Ignatian Spirituality in the Work of Morton Kelsey," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 14, no. 3 (1986): 203, doi:10.1177/009164718601400303. Morton Kelsey (1917-2001) was an Episcopal priest, Jungian therapist, counselor and religious writer, and professor formerly at the University of Notre Dame. He was the author of over twenty books, including *Reaching; God, Dreams and Revelation*; and *Christianity As Psychology*. He studied psychology at Claremont College, California, and under Carl Jung at the Jung Institute in Switzerland.

God, Dreams, and Revelation by Kelsey is used as a reference to "Dreams in the NT and Greco-Roman Literature" by Janet Meyer Everts, in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2. Academically speaking, Kelsey's theory is considered explicitly reliable.

[19] Morton Kelsey, *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), vii.

[20] Ernst Burkhart and Javier López, *Ordinary Life and Holiness in the Teaching of St. Josemaría*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2017), xviii.

[21] René Latourelle, *Theology: Science of Salvation*, trans. Mary Dominic (New York: St Paul Publications, 1969), 147.

[22] *Ibid*., 147-148. Spiritual perfection means in a general way a certain fullness of the spiritual life

"You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

The spiritual journey begins with God, who inspires individuals to seek perfection.[23] This journey involves nurturing relationships with oneself, others, the world, and, ultimately, with God. Faith serves as the guiding principle for integrating these relationships into a holistic spiritual life.[24] The Holy Spirit empowers believers in their pursuit of holiness and aids them in the process of sanctification.[25] This is consistent with the teaching found in the Gospel of John: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26).

The ultimate goal of spiritual theology is to understand how individuals, encouraged by Divine grace, strive for spiritual perfection. This study examines eight selected dreams of Don Bosco through the lens of Divine guidance and human response, focusing on his unwavering faith and commitment to sanctity.

Spiritual perfection is not limited to individuals but extends to communities, emphasizing the importance of mutual support in achieving human, social, and spiritual goals.[26] This mutual support calls for us to uphold and assist one another in the pursuit of these dimensions of perfection.[27] Charity, in both its affective and effective forms, plays a vital role in this process and is central to Christian perfection.[28] The measurement of charity and sanctification, along with the

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which lacks nothing for its complete development in this world or in the next.

[23] Joseph de Guibert, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. Paul Barrett (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 115.

[24] Mary Milligan, "Christian Spirituality," in *The College Student's Introduction to Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2017), 163-164.

[25] De Guibert, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, 111 & 114.

[26] *Ibid.*, 39.

[27] *Ibid.*, 44.

[28] *Ibid.*, 52. Affective charity means that we love God and love what He loves. This is uniting us to the Goodness of God. Effective charity means that we serve God and do what He commands. This makes

inspirations of the Holy Spirit, can be analyzed in Don Bosco's dreams to illustrate how he achieved spiritual perfection.

In summary, the aim of a study in spiritual theology is to analyze how individuals strive toward spiritual perfection under Divine grace.[29] Certainly, God initiates this process, with the free cooperation and faith response of the individual following in the pursuit of spiritual perfection.[30] In this book, Don Bosco's dreams are examined within the framework of the interaction between God's call and Don Bosco's faith-filled response. This approach seeks to explore how the examples found in his dreams reveals his journey toward personal and spiritual perfection.

This study also considers the concepts of "guidance" and "motivation" within the relationship between God's call and human faith response. Gerald Emmett Cardinal Carter[31] emphasizes that human action must involve both "imposition" and "motivation."[32] For example, the habit of personal prayer and the cultivation of virtues cannot be achieved purely through "imposition"; instead, these disciplines also require "motivation." When forming habits, these two factors must be considered together as a benchmark for shaping external conduct. Furthermore, "imposition" and "motivation" must be evaluated within the context of life values to properly form

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us act in accordance with His will.

[29] *Ibid.*, 11.

[30] *Ibid.*, 151-153. See also *Summa Theologiae* Ia IIæ, q.113, art.8: "In this natural order, the infusion of grace comes first; next the movement of free choice directed towards God; third the movement of free choice directed at sin; and fourth the forgiveness of sin."

[31] G. Emmett Carter was born in Montreal on March 1, 1912. He received his theological education at the Grand Seminary of Montreal and he was ordained on May 22, 1937. He was appointed Archbishop of the See of Toronto on April 27, 1978. One year later, on June 30, Pope John Paul II elevated Archbishop Carter to the Sacred College of Cardinals. Cardinal Carter contributed significantly to the Catholic community by seeking to improve race relations, founding Covenant House for street youth under 21, fighting against abortion, and protecting the rights of Catholics. On December 20, 1982, Cardinal Carter was named a Companion of the Order of Canada, the top honour of the Order reserved for Canadians demonstrating the highest degree of merit to their country and humanity. Cardinal Carter's resignation as Archbishop was accepted by the Pope and was announced on March 17, 1990. He passed away on April 6, 2003.

[32] G. Emmett Carter, *Psychology and the Cross* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2022), 100.

well-motivated actions.[33] Inspired by Cardinal Carter's insights, the author has chosen to use the term "guidance" rather than "imposition," as the latter implies coercion in accepting beliefs or adopting ways of living.[34] This substitution underscores the dynamic and cooperative relationship between God's call and the human response of faith.

The story of Moses in the Book of Exodus provides a potent example. Despite Moses's initial reluctance, God offered him guidance and motivation through reassurances and signs: "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain (Ex 3:12)." This interaction demonstrates how God combines guidance with motivation to inspire humanity's pursuit of spiritual goals. The theme is further reflected in the Letter of St. James, which emphasizes that faith and works must go hand in hand (Jm 4:24–26).[35] By placing Jesus Christ at the center of this relationship—referred to as "Christocentrism"[36]—we affirm that "there is salvation in no one else" (Ac 4:12)."

1.2.2 Morton Kelsey's Christian Interpretation of Dreams

To review Don Bosco's dreams, this book adopts Morton Kelsey's Christian interpretation of dreams alongside the previously mentioned framework. Kelsey identified two approaches to the inner journey of spirituality: the apophatic way and

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[33] *Ibid.*, 102.

[34] "The meaning of Impose in English," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed September 6, 2024, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/impose.

[35] You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead (Jm 4:24-26).

[36] Joseph Ratzinger [Benedict XVI, Pope], *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 53. Christocentrism indicates that humanity is assumed by the Son of God is in all its mysteries, from the incarnation to the ascension into heaven, efficacious for the salvation of humankind and for the radical renewal of creation. Christ is therefore the only Redeemer and absolute exemplar.

the kataphatic way.[37]

The apophatic way entails dismissing images as inadequate to explain the mystery of God.[38] For example, St. John of the Cross argued that nothing created or imagined can serve the intellect as a proper means for union with God. Instead, such images may become obstacles if one becomes too attached to them.[39] This apophatic way is often exemplified through daily participation in the liturgical life of the Church, a practice deeply rooted in monastic communities.[40]

The kataphatic way, as elaborated by Kelsey, involves the way of affirmation, wherein one begins in detached silence and moves into imagery to find God in all things.[41] St. Augustine's elaboration on this states that the world is intelligible and ordered due to the Creator and His plan, as God created everything according to the formal patterns eternally present in His mind—His Divine ideas.[42] Similarly, St. Francis de Sales highlighted the use of imagination to help the mind comprehend the particular mystery of Christ's life, thereby preventing wandering into mundane matters.[43] Following this approach, Kelsey studied dreams and demonstrated that dream imagery is both possible and a valuable resource. His approach aligns with the perspective of spiritual theology, which underscores a life motivated by faith and

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[37] Bunker, "Ignatian Spirituality in the Work of Morton Kelsey," 204-206.

[38] Kelsey, *Companions on the Inner Way: The Art of Spiritual Guidance* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 113.

[39] John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1973), 125-127.

[40] Bunker, "Ignatian Spirituality in the Work of Morton Kelsey," 205.

[41] *Ibid.*, 205-206.

[42] Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions: A New Translation* (Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 80, accessed 16 October 2021, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/stmarysca-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3134884. "*Sunt namque ideae principales formae quaedam, vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt, ae per hoe aeternae ae semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae in divina intelligentia continentur*" (PL 40:30).

[43] Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. Allan Ross (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2009), 74.

directed toward personal and spiritual perfection.[44]

In Kelsey's understanding of dreams, he defines a dream as a collection of vivid imagery over which we have no control.[45] He outlined four assumptions for the Christian interpretation of dreams:[46] (1) God is always present, not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual world, which constantly breaks into our consciousness through dreams and visions. (2) God offers guidance to those open to dreams. (3) Humans may experience direct encounters with the spiritual world. (4) God is more eager to communicate with us than we are inclined to listen.

Kelsey noted that dreams might have multiple meanings due to their variety, and he described seven characteristics of dreams:[47] (1) Dreams may reflect events from the prior day. (2) Dreams can uncover long-repressed content, helping individuals become more honest with themselves. (3) Dreams may involve other people, often because the dreamer's role resembles the roles of those appearing in the dreams. (4) Dreams may include archetypal content, borrowing from Carl Jung's concept that the psyche is surrounded by a spiritual world akin to how bodies are surrounded by the external world.[48] (5) Dreams may be related to extra-sensory perceptions.[49] Some

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[44] De Guibert, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, 115. See also, Mary Milligan, "Christian Spirituality," in *The College Student's Introduction to Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2017), 163-164.

[45] Kelsey, *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God*, 33-34.

[46] *Ibid.*, 69.

[47] *Ibid.*, 40-45.

[48] Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. He was Freud's earliest and most brilliant collaborators. Jung broke with Freud in 1912 over the dynamics of the unconscious and the definition of the libido. The dispute also involved their respective approaches to the psychic function of religious or spiritual experience.

[49] Extrasensory perception (ESP) refers to the apparent acquisition of information about the environment that seems not to be mediated by the usual sensory modalities, or by inference from information that is conventionally available. ESP can be categorized as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition.

Telepathy refers to the paranormal acquisition of information concerning the thoughts, feelings or activities of another conscious being.

Clairvoyance is defined as paranormal acquisition of information concerning an object or

dreams may involve extrasensory perceptions, which are difficult to understand while confined to a time-space mindset. (6) Certain dreams may be clear and fully intelligible. (7) Dreams may originate from external spiritual influences, referred to as numinous dreams.

Kelsey admitted that extrasensory perception, clear dreams, and numinous dreams are particularly uncommon. Nevertheless, he highlighted that Don Bosco's educational and humanitarian efforts were heavily influenced by dreams connected to extrasensory perception and numinous knowledge.[50]

For the Christian interpretation of dreams, Kelsey suggested several practices:[51] (1) Keeping a record of dreams, thoughts, and feelings, as this provides a valuable account of one's spiritual growth. (2) Taking dreams seriously and remaining open to God. (3) Paying attention to images, as these bring people into contact with lingering problems, difficulties, or concerns. (4) Making associations by reviewing dream imagery in relation to personal experiences or memories, which can uncover meanings or even repressed content. (5) Paying close attention to repetitive dreams, as they often hold significance. (6) Engaging with dreams as if they were films, which may reveal insights into forces at work in one's life and the direction one should take. (7) Understanding archetypal symbols, which often carry universal meanings alongside personal ones. Symbols such as automobiles, cars, unknown figures, animals, houses,

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contemporary physical event; in contrast to telepathy, the information is assumed to derive directly from an external physical source.

Precognition is defined as a form of extrasensory perception in which the target is some future event that cannot be deduced from normally known data in the present.

[50] Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation; a Christian Interpretation of Dreams* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1991), 11. See also, Kelsey, "Foreword: The Dream as Religious Experience," in *Dreams, Visions & Prophecies of Don Bosco*, ed. Eugene M. Brown (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1986), xxxvi-xl.

[51] Id., *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God*, 45-55.

or shadows may reflect broader realities that influence the human psyche.[52]

In exploring archetypal symbols, Kelsey proposed four key questions:[53] (1) What does the symbol represent in the dreamer's life? (2) What aspect of the dreamer resembles the figure or symbol? (3) What stands out about this figure or symbol in the dream? (4) What does this mean to the individual? These questions offer valuable tools for deeply understanding dream symbols.

According to the Christian interpretation of dreams outlined above, dreams compensate for our conscious limitations by revealing aspects of the subconscious that we are unaware of.[54] This underscores the psychological and spiritual importance of dreams, which can assist in the pursuit of spiritual meaning.[55] Kelsey emphasized that, when studying dreams, one must ask for God's guidance, as only He can inspire understanding of dreams that originate from Him.[56] This aligns with Joseph's statement in the Book of Genesis: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, I pray you" (Gn 40:8). Thus, Kelsey's Christian interpretation of dreams appears highly suitable for use in this study.

This study categorizes the issues of Christian dream interpretation into three categories to analyze the eight selected dreams of Don Bosco: (1) Personal issues, involving the exploration of thoughts and feelings; (2) Correlation between the dream content and the reality, including images and archetypal symbols in association with experience and memory; (3) Spiritual issue, encompassing openness to God and one's relationship with Him.

By studying Don Bosco's dreams within Kelsey's framework and the perspectives

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[52] Id., *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 200.

[53] *Ibid.*, 177.

[54] Id., *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God*, 54.

[55] Id., *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 198.

[56] *Ibid.*, 204.

of the Church, we gain deeper insight into Don Bosco's journey toward spiritual perfection and its benefit to the faithful.

In Kelsey's own research, he acknowledged that Don Bosco's dreams provided insights beyond his conscious, waking life. These dreams were integral to his prayer life and spiritual experiences, and Kelsey observed that Don Bosco appeared to maintain a close relationship with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Kelsey emphasized that Don Bosco's dreams fit the category of extrasensory perception dreams, incorporating telepathic, clairvoyant, and precognitive elements.[57] In conclusion, Kelsey's theory emerges as a fitting tool for this study, supported by both its rationale and his prior examination of Don Bosco's dreams.

[57] Id., "Foreword: The Dream as Religious Experience," xxxvi-xxxviii.

2. The First Dream (nine or ten years old) in 1824 or 1825[58]

We now begin an analysis of the eight selected dreams of Don Bosco to elaborate on the interaction between God's call and the faith-response of St. John Bosco. Fr. Eugene M. Brown has stated that Don Bosco and his dreams are closely related to each other.[59] Therefore, by analyzing the selected dreams of Don Bosco, this study seeks to explore a deeper understanding of his spiritual life, his educational and apostolic experiences, his concerns, and how to imitate his way of holiness and loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Church.[60]

During the winters of 1824 and 1825, young John (as Don Bosco was known then) attended Fr. Joseph Lacqua's school at Capriglio.[61] Although he had begun his formal elementary education in a nearby village, his daily life was still largely rooted in the countryside. While his sphere of interaction was expanding, the little house at Becchi remained the center of his growth in faith. It appears that Don Bosco had his First Dream in this house. Key religious moments, such as his first Confession and First Communion, also occurred during this stage of Don Bosco's middle childhood, influenced by Mama Margaret's religious care.

According to Don Bosco's autobiography, in his First Dream, he found himself in a large yard near his home where some children were laughing, playing games, and

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[58] MO, 18-21.

[59] Eugene M. Brown, ed., *Dreams, Visions and Prophecies Dreams, Visions & Prophecies of Don Bosco*, (New Rochelle, New York: Don Bosco Publications, 1986), 1.

[60] Lenti, "Introductory Essay," xlii.

[61] DBHS, vol. 1, 177. Fr Joseph Lacqua was born in Montabone on 18 January 1764 and died at Castelletto Merli on 3 January 1847, at the age of nearly 83. He was the teacher of little John at Capriglio during the winter of 1824-25. At first, the priest did not want to accept this boy and his mother's request because they belonged to the public school in Castelnuovo, according to their domicile. Eventually, Fr. Lacqua accepted little John attending the public school in Capriglio because of a request by an aunt of John, Maria Giovanna (Marianna) Occhiena, who was the housekeeper of the priest in 1824-1847. It seemed that Don Bosco was inspired by Fr. Lacqua and according to the study of Fr. Arthur J. Lenti, who was a Salesian priest and an emeritus professor of the Salesian Studies in Berkeley, USA, who passed away on 6 January 2022, and commented that the schooling with Fr. Lacqua was important to inspire the vocation of little John, and contributed to arousing his first dream.

swearing. Little John tried to stop their offensive words by reasoning with them and even using his fists. At that moment, a dignified man appeared and asked him to teach his friends with gentleness and love. This man introduced a woman as John's teacher. Soon after, wild animals—such as goats, dogs, cats, and bears—appeared, but they transformed into gentle lambs under the guidance of a stately lady, who instructed John to be humble, strong, and energetic.[62] The wild animals that John saw became gentle lambs who welcomed the man and the lady. Upon waking from the dream, John shared it with his family, who provided varying interpretations. His brother Joseph speculated that John might become a keeper of goats or sheep. His half-brother Anthony mocked him, suggesting he might become a robber chief. Mama Margaret interpreted the dream as a sign that John might become a priest. Meanwhile, his grandmother dismissed it, saying no attention should be paid to dreams.

2.1 The Analysis of the Dream

2.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

Certain religious and everyday life factors at that time were significant to this dream. Fr. Pietro Stella[63] suggested that the celebration of the Feast of St. Peter, to

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[62] Arthur J Lenti, "Don Bosco's Vocation-Mission Dream - Its Recurrence and Significance," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 45–156, 53. Don Bosco had originally written: "*Renditi sano, forte, robusto*." Then he struck a heavy line across the word '*sano* (healthy)' and wrote the word '*umile* (humble)' above it. This may represent later moralizing reflection since Don Bosco wrote *Memoirs of the Oratory* in 1870s, including his First Dream in 1824 or 1825. After he had accumulated years in his priesthood ministry and his service to needy youth, we attempt to state that Don Bosco may have focused not only on the physical health, but also on the development of well-being in a holistic manner, particularly for spirituality. Therefore, he underlined "humble" instead of "healthy." See also Andrea Bozzolo, *Don Bosco's Childhood Dream: Theological Reading* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2023), 78. Fr. Andrea Bozzolo elaborates that in Don Bosco's First Dream, the notions of humility, strength, and energy may refer to the strength of spirit, of character, and of the body respectively. In accordance with this argument, we attempt to state that Don Bosco may have already pondered physical health in terms of "energetic," thereby, he particularly focused on spirituality (humility) in order for a holistic development heading towards personal and spiritual perfection.

[63] Fr. Pietro Stella (1930-2007) was a Salesian priest and a professor of the Study Center of Don Bosco of the Pontifical University of Salesian in Rome. He contributed his great effort to the historical study of St. John Bosco.

whom the village chapel was dedicated, may have influenced this dream.[64] John could have previously heard preaching that mentioned the feeding of lambs and sheep, a theme that appeared in his dream. Additionally, Fr. Lenti theorized that the Feast of the Annunciation may have been another influence, as the Angelus prayer is briefly referenced in the dream.[65]

Another potential contributor was the theme of the Jubilee of 1825, which emphasized the pastoral ministry of the clergy among the faithful.[66] These religious factors, combined with John's rural setting, likely influenced the imagery of the dream, including the presence of a shepherd.

The animals in the dream were also familiar to peasant children like John, reflecting his daily life. Mama Margaret's teachings about a priestly vocation may have further inspired the dream. Furthermore, John's interactions with Fr. Lacqua during elementary school and his early gatherings to entertain local children could have synthesized a vision tied to his own experiences.[67] Clearly, Mama Margaret's religious teachings also played a substantial role in shaping the imagery and focus of his dream.

2.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

In the dream, young John tried to stop the boys who were swearing, using both

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[64] DBLW, 7-10.

[65] DBHS, vol. 1, 181.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] *Ibid*., 180. See also MO, 27-29. Don Bosco said: "When I appeared, my companions and even grown-ups would run to me in a crowd and clamor for a story from a fellow who scarcely understood what he had read. At times, along the road to Castelnuovo or in some field I would be surrounded by hundreds of people, anxious to hear what a poor child had to say." See also DBLW, 12-13. During the leisure time of little John, especially on Sundays or Feast days, an initial model of the oratory of Don Bosco was formed, and hence, his sense of industry in his peer relationships and his vocational perspective were developed. He started this kind of festive oratory when he was ten years old. In this oratory, recapping the sermon of the priest on Sunday morning, catechetical talks, stories, shows, and prayers were included. Since it was hard for people taking a long journey to Castelnuovo or Buttigliera, therefore hearing a sermon or attending a catechism class, became a routine schedule in this oratory and was set so that the religious sessions were conducted first, and the show began subsequently.

words and physical means. This response demonstrated John's keen sense of conscience and virtue. The strong religious upbringing provided by Mama Margaret likely played a key role in fostering John's commitment to truth and righteousness.

The dignified man encouraged John to guide his friends through gentleness and love, which may symbolize divine guidance. Reflecting on this dream, Don Bosco wrote: "I was a poor, ignorant child. I was unable to talk to those youngsters about religion."[68] This statement indicates his acknowledgment of personal limitations and humility.

As the dream progressed, the children ceased their laughter and swearing, instead gathering around the dignified man[69]—an image that symbolizes Christocentricity.[70] Salesian tradition interprets this dignified man as Jesus Christ, who identifies himself in the dream by saying: "I am the son of the woman whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day."[71] This reference highlights Mama Margaret's emphasis on Marian devotion and prayer.

Young John's response to the dignified man and the children's transformed behavior reflects human cooperation with divine grace in the journey toward spiritual growth. The dream emphasizes teaching virtue, avoiding sin, and strengthening faith

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[68] MO, 18.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] See Angelo Amato, "John Paul II's Christological Catechesis," The Holy See, 2000, accessed 19 December 2021, https://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01101998_p-08_en.html. Christocentricity means that Christ is the "center of salvation history." He is indeed the final event towards which all salvation history converges. He, who came in the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), is "the key, the center and end of all human history." The catechetical message helps the Christian to locate himself in history and to insert himself into it, by showing that Christ is the ultimate meaning of this history. Christocentricity, moreover, means that the Gospel message does not come from man, but it is the Word of God. Thus all that is transmitted by catechesis is "the teaching of Jesus Christ, the truth that he communicates, or, more precisely, the Truth that he is." Christocentricity obliges catechesis to transmit what Jesus teaches about God, man, happiness, the moral life, death etc. without in any way changing his thought.

[71] MO, 19.

through humility. These themes align closely with moral and spiritual formation.[72]

2.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

In his First Dream, young John received instructions regarding gentleness, love, and the importance of being strong and energetic from a dignified man and a stately lady. These instructions primarily focused on his personal and spiritual growth, though the future directives within the dream seem somewhat broad. Accordingly, from the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream might be interpreted as an instance of clairvoyance concerning young John's daily interactions with his peer group and the initial formation of an oratory model. This event corresponded with Don Bosco's experiences at that young age, and he derived inspiration directly from the dignified man and the lady in the dream, who are interpreted as external guiding figures.

In this First Dream, young John felt confused and frightened during his dialogue with the dignified man and the stately lady. He even began crying when he saw the transformation of wild animals into gentle lambs.[73] Similarly, young John described himself as a poor and ignorant child.[74] These words reveal Don Bosco's early struggles with self-esteem and personal limitations.

There seems to be a clear connection between reality and the content of the dream. The images of children, wild animals, and lambs emerge vividly and are tied symbolically to Don Bosco's real-life experiences and memories. The representation of children in Don Bosco's First Dream reflects his daily interactions with his friends at the time. Depicted as laughing, playing games, and swearing, these children mirrored John's social life and environment.

Juan Eduardo Cirlot suggested that the image of children symbolizes the future,

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[72] *Ibid.*, 18-19.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.*

representing transformation, a return to simplicity, youthful renewal, and even angelic qualities.[75] In contrast, Carl Jung viewed the image of children as representations of the preconscious aspect of the psyche. Jung argued that these figures served to balance the one-sided nature of consciousness and facilitate future growth. While these interpretations are not explicitly tied to spirituality, they resonate with the dream's request for John's personal and spiritual development.[76]

The symbolism of children in this context highlights individual growth to a certain extent, based on the interpretations mentioned above. Although these psychological perspectives are not directly connected to the spiritual dimension, they align with the instructions given to young John by the dignified man and the lady in the dream, which emphasized his personal and spiritual development.

The images of wild animals[77] alongside gentle lambs, both of which were part of young John's rural life, also carry symbolic meaning. Jung proposed that animals symbolize the non-human psyche, representing instinctual drives and the unconscious. He further suggested that the more primitive the animal, the deeper the symbolic stratum it represents.[78] Building on Jung's insights, Ad de Vries proposed that

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[75] Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Routledge & Kergan Paul Ltd. (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995), 45. Juan Eduardo Cirlot (1916-1973) who was a poet, composer, author of a major symbol dictionary, and co-author of *Ars Hispaniae* stated that psychologically speaking, the child is of the soul – the product of the *coniunctio* between the unconscious and consciousness: one dreams of a child when some great spiritual change is about to take place under favorable circumstances.

[76] Ad de Vries and Arthur de Vries, *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Bingley: Emerald, 2009), 120-121. Ad de Vries underlined in terms of Carl Jung's thought that the symbol of children indicates the unfulfilled desire and the nostalgic memories of untainted joy. It seems that it does not have a close relationship with Don Bosco's First Dream.
Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. He was Freud's earliest and most brilliant collaborators. The son of a Reformed pastor, Jung broke with Freud in 1912 over the dynamics of the unconscious and the definition of the libido. The dispute had also involved their respective approaches to the psychic function of religious or spiritual experience.

[77] MO, 19. Don Bosco described goats, dogs, cats, bears and so forth as wild animals.

[78] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 13. Cirlot explained that the origin of animal symbolism is closely linked with totemism and animal worship. It, therefore seems that this is not related to Don Bosco's First Dream.

frightening animals and helpful animals represent the negative and positive dimensions of the archetypes within the unconscious.[79] This concept parallels the dream's imagery of wild animals and gentle lambs, which reflect the transformation of unruly, swearing children into calm individuals gathered around the dignified man. The transformation of wild animals into gentle lambs represents a shift from chaos to virtue, mirroring the spiritual essence of the dream.

Cirlot noted that lambs signify purity, innocence, and meekness,[80] while De Vries associated them with sweetness, forgiveness, docility, and sacrifice.[81] These symbolic meanings resonate with Don Bosco's account of his dream: "I looked round again, and where before I had seen wild animals, I now saw gentle lambs. They were all jumping and bleating as if to welcome that man and lady."[82]

The spiritual themes in Don Bosco's First Dream reflect the deep faith and religious traditions of the Piedmontese people during that period. These traditions often included statues and imagery of Jesus Christ and the Madonna. The descriptions of a nobly dressed man with a shining face and a stately lady wearing a mantle adorned with stars align with these cultural and spiritual symbols. The radiant face and

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[79] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 18. Jung believed that the mother archetype could contain either positive aspects, such as motherly love and warmth, or negative aspects such as the terrible mother or goddess of fate.

De Vries also stated that for Roman signa, eagle, wolf, bull, horse, wild boar are the related symbols in relation to cubes (earth) and spheres (heaven) that manifest the power of instinct. This is clearly not related closely to Don Bosco's First Dream.

[80] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 175. Cirlot provided an instance of a tympanum in the church at Armentia, where the *Agnus Dei* is shown inside a circle (symbolizing the All, or perfection) accompanied by the epigraph: *Mors ego sum mortis. Vocor Agnus, sum Leo fortis* (I am the death of death. I am called a lamb; I am a strong lion). This also, does not have a close relationship with Don Bosco's First Dream.

In 1958, Alleau, in *De la Nature des symbols*, proposed that *agnus* is related to the Greek *agnos* (fire) and so is a sacrificial symbol of the periodic renovation of the world. This is echoing the request to Don Bosco by the lady of stately appearance in the dream that he should make himself humble, strong, and energetic. This appears to be connected indirectly with difficulties of taking care of youth in Don Bosco's ministry.

[81] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 344. De Vries highlighted that in Dionysian rites lambs were sacrificed to under-world-deities to release Dionysus (fertility). This is not very strongly related with Don Bosco's First Dream.

[82] MO, 19.

noble attire likely represent the divine presence, akin to the shining face of Moses after speaking with God,[83] or the radiance of Jesus Christ during the Transfiguration.[84]

In this dream, Don Bosco demonstrated a certain openness to God. Despite his young age, his willingness to seek the dream's meaning reflects his spiritual sensitivity and early motivation. Upon waking, John was eager to share his vision with his family, saying: "I was unable to cast that dream out of my mind."[85] This statement reveals Don Bosco's deep interest in understanding the dream's significance—a possible indicator of his receptiveness to divine guidance. Fr. Lenti interpreted this response as a subconscious reaction to John Bosco's psychological state, as expressed both in the dream itself and in his family's discussion about it.[86]

2.1.4 The Consequences

Don Bosco's First Dream left a lasting impact for him, profoundly influencing his thoughts and, ultimately, his life's mission.[87] Although young John received varying interpretations of his dream from his family members, he heeded his grandmother's suggestion and initially paid little attention to the dream. However, decades later, during audiences granted by Pope Blessed Pius IX on 21 March 1858 and again on 12 January 1867,[88] Don Bosco was encouraged and commanded by the pope to record his extraordinary experiences, including this First Dream. The pope believed these

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[83] "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the covenant in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" (Ex 34: 29).

[84] "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light" (Mt 17: 1-2).

[85] MO, 20.

[86] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Vocation-Mission Dream - Its Recurrence and Significance," 89.

[87] *Ibid*.

[88] BM, vol. 5, 577. See also, *Ibid.*, vol. 8, 256.

accounts would serve as encouragement and provide a spiritual norm for Don Bosco's sons.

2.1.5 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

For the Salesians, the appearance of the dignified man and the lady in the dream—surrounded by wild animals and lambs—has been understood as an image of a shepherd and an educator of young people.[89] This figure, according to the dream, exemplified the practice of virtue and the instruction of youth on the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue. Inspired by this vision, Don Bosco dedicated his life to becoming a shepherd and mentor to the youth, guided by gentleness, strength, and love. He worked energetically to encourage young people to attain personal and spiritual perfection for the greater glory of God—an evangelical commitment rooted in youth pastoral ministry.

In terms of guidance and motivation, the symbols in Don Bosco's First Dream emphasized the image of a shepherd and teacher. The dream underscored the transformative power of education and the importance of guiding youth on their journey toward holiness. Through this vocation, Don Bosco discovered his apostolic and charitable mission, which served as the foundation of his lifelong work.

Furthermore, the dream conveys a profound sense of Marian guidance, highlighting Mary's instrumental role in Don Bosco's mission. Her presence in the dream foreshadowed a life guided by Marian devotion, which became central to Don Bosco's spirituality and works.

Even though the influence of papal authority was not a direct element of the dream itself, it played a crucial role in shaping the legacy of this vision. Following Pope

[89] Cf. C, 6. Our Society in the Church: "…… Faithful to the commitments Don Bosco has passed on to us, we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor…… we are educators of the faith for the working classes, particularly by means of social communication; we proclaim the Gospel to those who have not yet received it……"

Blessed Pius IX's directive, Don Bosco recorded this pivotal dream in his autobiography, both to encourage the Salesians and to establish a spiritual framework for their mission.[90] Today, this First Dream remains a foundational inspiration for the Salesian Society's commitment to the care and guidance of underprivileged boys.[91]

[90] DBLW, 9-10.

[91] BM, vol. 1, 96-97.

3. The Another Dream in 1844[92]

In 1844, after three years of training at the Pastoral Institute, Don Bosco was assigned as the director of the Little Hospital of St. Philomena and assisted Fr. Borel in working at the Refuge for abandoned and runaway girls.[93] Meanwhile, the festive oratory, which had begun at the Pastoral Institute, had a new beginning at the Refuge, although it remained in a provisional form.

Don Bosco recorded "Another Dream in 1844" in his autobiography. This dream occurred on the night before the second Sunday of October 1844, during the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin.[94] At that time, he was leaving the Pastoral Institute and beginning his new assignments, but he was worried about not having enough space to gather the youth in the priests' quarters near the hospital. This concern is evident from his statement: "I had to tell my boys that the Oratory would be moving to Valdocco. But the uncertainty of a place, means, and personnel had me really worried. The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart."[95]

That night, Don Bosco had a dream, which he considered a sequel to his First Dream from when he was nine years old. As he noted: "That night I had another dream, which seems to be an appendix to the one I had at Becchi when I was nine years old. I think it advisable to relate it literally."[96]

In this dream, Don Bosco first saw different kinds of animals.[97] Then a lady dressed as a shepherdess appeared and guided him on a journey to visit this unusual

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[92] MO, 209-210.

[93] DBHS, vol. 2, 81.

[94] BM, vol. 2, 191.

[95] MO, 209.

[96] *Ibid*.

[97] *Ibid*. Don Bosco described: "I dreamt that I was standing in the middle of a multitude of wolves, goats, and kids, lambs, ewes, rams, dogs, even birds. All together they made a din, a racket, or better, a bedlam to frighten the stoutest heart."

flock of animals. During the journey, there were three stops, during which the animals gradually transformed into lambs. At the first stop, Don Bosco saw a meadow where animals were grazing, gamboling, and showing no signs of aggression toward one another. At the second stop, he encountered a large courtyard surrounded by porticoes and a church.[98] In these locations, about four-fifths of the animals transformed into lambs, and their number continued to grow. Some of the lambs transformed into shepherds who began to care for other flocks. Finally, at the third stop, Don Bosco came upon a wondrously large church accompanied by the sound of orchestra music.[99] Inside this church, a white banner hung with the inscription: "*Hic domus mea, inde Gloria mea.*"[100] Don Bosco was awakened by the sound of the bell of the Church of St. Francis.

3.1 The Analysis of the Dream

3.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

Don Bosco was concerned about starting the new priestly ministry (as mentioned above), at the same time as the festive oratory was being transferred to the Refuge due to his new assignments. This change meant the oratory was no longer supported by the Pastoral Institute. However, Fr. Borel provided considerable support in this ministry.[101] These challenges left Don Bosco feeling anxious, but the dream provided him with comfort and reaffirmed his vocation.

There might have been a festive connection influencing this dream, as the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin was celebrated on the second Sunday in October

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[98] *Ibid*. The courtyard and porticoes were the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, and the church was the Church of St. Francis de Sales built in 1852.

[99] *Ibid*., 210. This referred to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians constructed between 1863 and 1868.

[100] *Ibid*. "Here is my house and hence my glory will come forth."

[101] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Vocation-Mission Dream - Its Recurrence and Significance," 101.

during that era,[102] potentially adding significance. The Gospel reading for that feast, "The Boy Jesus in the Temple" (Lk 2: 41-51),[103] may have also influenced the scenarios depicted in the dream. Two parallels stand out between the Gospel reading and Don Bosco's dream: (1) St. Luke, the Gospel author, described the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph searching anxiously for Jesus among their relatives and friends.[104] Similarly, in his Another Dream, Don Bosco experienced anxiety and fear, particularly about the menacing animals. This anxiety could have been triggered by his worries over the difficulties surrounding the oratory's relocation and uncertain future. (2) In the Gospel story, Jesus displayed obedience to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, while His mother kept all things in her heart.[105] In Don Bosco's dream, he was instructed to follow the shepherdess's guidance. Although he did not fully understand the circumstances, he obeyed her message. The lady in the dream reassured Don Bosco that he would comprehend events when the prophecy was fulfilled.[106] This mirrors Our Lady's thoughtful acceptance and reflection on what she witnessed, keeping all things in her heart, even when she did not fully grasp their meaning at the time.

These two similarities suggest that, much like the Blessed Virgin Mary's

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[102] Frederick Holweck, "Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary," CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, accessed 20 November 2021, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10046a.htm. The object of this feast is to commemorate the dignity of the Mary as Mother of God on the second Sunday in October. The feast was first granted, on the petition of King Joseph Manuel, to the dioceses of Portugal and to Brazil and Algeria on 22 January 1751, together with the feast of the Purity of Mary, and was assigned to the first Sunday in May. In the following year both feasts were extended to the province of Venice, 1778 to the kingdom of Naples, and 1807 to Tuscany. At present the feast is not found in the universal calendar of the church. In the Roman Breviary the feast of the Maternity is commemorated on the second, and the feast of the Purity on the third, Sunday in October.

[103] *Liber Usualis: Missae Et Officii* (Tournai: Desclee & Co., 1953), 1685.

[104] "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously" (Lk 2:48).

[105] "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart." (Lk 2:51)

[106] MO, 210. The lady dressed as a shepherdess said: "You will understand everything when you see in fact with your bodily eyes what you are looking at now with the eyes of your mind."

experience, Don Bosco's ministry and the charism of the oratory grew gradually over time. Based on the evidence mentioned above, it seems possible that Don Bosco's dream was influenced by the Gospel reading associated with the feast.

3.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

The recurrence of themes in this dream and Don Bosco's First Dream was profound, significantly influencing his life and mission. As a result, Don Bosco regarded these two dreams as strongly interconnected, both contributing to the fulfillment of his vocation. They highlighted the themes of guidance and motivation in response to Divine will, enabling him to carry out his apostolic youth ministry.

In this dream, two churches appeared, symbolizing Don Bosco's intention to seek God's glory through his priestly ministry. Additionally, Don Bosco's continued intention to celebrate Mass in the dream serves as strong evidence of his dedication to priestly service for God's glory,[107] as well as his deep faith response.

Don Bosco described the transformation of animals into lambs and lambs into shepherds in the dream as wonderful.[108] This imagery was closely linked to the themes of guidance and God's initiative in shaping the development of Don Bosco's charism and his future congregation. He was joyful to see youth gathering together and was further inspired by their personal and spiritual growth. Even as these young individuals became his assistants, they continued to grow spiritually, despite the challenges that arose, such as the transfer of the festive oratory.

The guidance of the lady, dressed as a shepherdess in the dream, was understood as symbolizing motivation, encouraging Don Bosco to persist in pursuing his vocation. These elements in the "Another Dream" reaffirmed Don Bosco's pastoral ministry and

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[107] *Ibid*. Don Bosco said: "I wanted to be off because it seemed to me time to celebrate Mass."

[108] *Ibid*. Don Bosco said: "Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were transformed into shepherds, who as they grew took care of the others."

strengthened his vocational commitment.

3.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

Regarding the transfer of the festive oratory, Don Bosco was deeply worried and struggled to sleep well.[109] In the dream, a lady dressed as a shepherdess appeared, along with two churches, a large courtyard surrounded by porticoes, and a field sown with various vegetables. These images provided spiritual reassurance and encouragement as Don Bosco navigated his concerns about the oratory and his responsibility for the boys under his care. These worries stemmed from personal issues, including his thoughts and emotions at that time.

From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream can be interpreted as an instance of clairvoyance, as it reflected Don Bosco's immediate concerns about the transfer of the oratory—a contemporary event then unfolding. In this dream, however, Don Bosco also gained inspiration from the figure of the lady, who was understood to represent an external, physical source of reassurance. Furthermore, the dream may also be categorized as precognitive because it hinted at the future development of Don Bosco's oratory, something he himself could not have fully envisioned. Reflecting on the dream after awakening, Don Bosco remarked: "I see clearly, and I see with my bodily eyes. I know where I'm going and what I'm doing."[110]

Regarding the correlation between the dream's content and reality, the images of the shepherdess and the two churches were prominent. While Cirlot does not provide an explicit explanation of the shepherdess, he does offer insight into the symbol of the shepherd. Exploring this symbol further can deepen our understanding of its significance in Don Bosco's Another Dream. According to Cirlot, the shepherd symbolizes the conductor of souls to the Land of the Dead and is connected to

[109] *Ibid.*, 209.

[110] *Ibid*., 210.

supreme power, as flocks represent cosmic forces.[111] Analogously, this imagery may allude to the relationship between Jesus Christ and Christians, particularly in the context of caring for needy youth.[112]

In Don Bosco's Another Dream, a multitude of wolves, goats, kids, lambs, ewes, rams, dogs, and birds appeared—animals that were commonly encountered by Piedmontese peasants of that era. These rural experiences would naturally have been reflected in Don Bosco's own subconscious mind.[113]

Our Lady, symbolic of holy maternal guidance, was represented in the dream as a shepherdess.[114] This figure is associated with the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed

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[111] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 294. Cirlot also explained the symbol of shepherd which was the title given to the lunar god Tammuz as the shepherd of the "flocks" of the stars. According to Krappe, this idea is closely bound up with the passion of Tammuz for Aphrodite, because of the relationship between the phases of the moon and dismemberment. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 510. De Vries elaborated that the symbol of shepherd represents shepherd-gods, for example, Anubis (Egypt), Attis (Phrygian), Paris, Tammuz and Mardul (Babylonian), Hermes (Greek), Apollo, Yahweh, Christ. In addition, this symbol indicates the meaning of sheep-carrying gods. De Vries considered the symbol of shepherd to indicate the guardian of ancient wisdom. These explanations do not have a close relationship with Don Bosco's dreams. Nevertheless, De Vries stated that Rachel in the Book of Genesis is the symbol of shepherdess: "Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them" (Gn 29:9).

[112] "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:11-17).

[113] Regarding this scenario, it is easy to associate it with chapter 11 of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, "Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" (Is 11: 5-6).

To some extent, there are similarities between these verses and the dream. For instance, (1) the element of animals is involved. (2) A child is leading the animals, just like Don Bosco is requested to work and take care of the animals in the dream. (3) These two descriptions occur in playground as well. Certainly, we do not have significant evidence to show the correlation between these verses and this dream of Don Bosco, but the similarity is urging us to pay attention to this point.

See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 28-29. Birds appeared in this dream, which were not in Don Bosco's First Dream. Cirlot stated that birds are very frequently used to symbolize human souls, with some of the earliest examples being found in the art of ancient Egypt. Sometimes, they are depicted with human heads, as in Hellenic iconography. Jung considered that birds are beneficent animals that represent spirits or angels, supernatural aid, thoughts and flights of fancy. This is symbolic of spiritualization.

[114] Cf. Just Host, "September Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary," *Devotion to Our Lady*, accessed 28 January 2020, http://devotiontoourlady.com/september.html. Regarding the lady dressed as a

Virgin. Similarly, the shepherdess figure may have aligned with the common religious understanding of pious Piedmontese peasants at the time.

In the dream, a large church with an orchestra was also depicted, suggesting the presence of music. This imagery, too, would have resonated with the lived experience of those in Turin during that period. Religious symbols like churches were part of the daily lives and perceptions of people in that era. According to De Vries, the symbol of a church can signify a ship of souls, a mother-symbol with uterine font, and so forth.[115] By analogy, the church in Don Bosco's dream likely symbolized the salvation of youth's souls and the growth of his oratory.

Regarding spiritual matters, after observing three stops in the dream, Don Bosco remarked: "I wanted to know the meaning of that journey with its halts, the house, the church, the other church."[116] This statement reflects Don Bosco's openness to God's guidance and his motivation to explore the dream's meaning in order to understand and fulfill God's will.

3.1.4 The Consequences

In Don Bosco's autobiography, he provided insights into the dream known as Another Dream, saying: "At that time I understood little of its meaning since I put

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shepherdess in this dream of Don Bosco, it may be associated with Our Lady of Divine Shepherd in the small town of Albert, Amiens Diocese of France. This is a Marian devotion started in the 12th century about a Marian statue found by a shepherd. The pilgrimage to this Marian devotion was revived again in 1870, and a Basilica in honor of Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd was built in 1887. Although we do not have any obvious evidence showing a correlation to this dream, yet the lady's figure in the dream is similar to Our Lady of Divine Shepherd to a certain degree, and the peasant living conditions for the two scenarios are similar. See also Lenti, "Don Bosco's Vocation-Mission Dream - Its Recurrence and Significance," 102. According to Fr. Lenti's study, Don Bosco's autobiography (including the Another Dream in 1844) was authored in the mid-1870s. Also, the two dreams of the Holy Martyrs in 1845 were mentioned to Fr. Julius Barberis in 1875. These events were in the same era of the Marian devotion and pilgrimage revived in the 1870s as mentioned above, which might have been acknowledged by Don Bosco at that time. Even though we have no significant proof supporting the correlation between the Marian devotion and the impact to this dream, the possibility of this association is still reasonably feasible.

[115] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 123. De Vries treated the symbol of church as fire or sun-tower, fertility, and folklore, but these symbols are not strongly related to Don Bosco's Another Dream.

[116] MO, 210.

little faith in it. But I understood little by little as the dream began to come true."[117] At the moment, Don Bosco was experiencing significant uncertainty and challenging circumstances due to his departure from the Pastoral Institute to the Refuge. This young priest was facing instability regarding the oratory and its future. The dream not only brought him comfort but also provided confirmation regarding his vocational path.[118]

Don Bosco also noted a continuing theme following "Another Dream," which led to two additional dreams on the same subject.[119] These subsequent dreams, referred to as the first and second dreams of the Holy Martyrs, clearly revealed his vocation as a priest.[120] Consequently, these vocational dreams served to affirm and strengthen the charism of the oratory. They bolstered Don Bosco's confidence in his mission to serve the youth and fulfill the Divine will.

3.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

The sanctification of Don Bosco's concerns is one of the significant elements in relation to human reason guided by faith. In light of the uncertainty surrounding the oratory, Don Bosco's worries and concerns were understandable. This dream not only alleviated his concerns but also encouraged him to follow Divine guidance in facing

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[117] *Ibid*.

[118] DBHS, vol. 2, 58.

[119] MO, 210. "Later, together with another dream, it served as a blueprint for my decisions." See also MB, vol. 2, 232-234. This dream mentioned by Don Bosco after this Another Dream was confided on 2 February 1875. This dream was similar to the Another Dream consisting of the appearance of a lady and youth, and the uncertainty of the oratory at that time. Don Bosco saw different places and churches. The idea of obedience to keep his companions was the most significant in the dream in relation to the establishment of Don Bosco's congregation.

[120] *Ibid*., 231-235, 266-268. The first and second dreams of the Holy Martyrs are not part of the theoretical samples and are not studied in this research. These dreams were unveiled to Fr. Julius Barberis, who was a novice master of the Society of St. Francis de Sales at that time, in February 1875. The first dream of the Holy Martyrs happened in May 1845. At that time, the oratory was forced to leave Barolo's Little Hospital. The details of this dream included (1) The spot of the martyrdom was shown by the Lady in the dream. (2) The helpers bound by "the ribbon of obedience". The second dream of the Holy Martyrs occurred on the 4th Sunday of Advent, 1845, and the oratory was forced to leave St. Martin's Church. The exact spot building a big Church was the main theme of this dream.

the challenges of the oratory. This reflects the dynamic relationship between guidance and motivation, as well as the interplay of God's initiative and humanity's faith-filled responses. It serves as an example of sanctification amidst Don Bosco's life circumstances.

The confirmation of St. John Bosco's vocation is another significant element of the Another Dream. Fr. Arthur Lenti commented on this dream, stating: "It was in 1844 that Don Bosco's the vocational option for 'poor and abandoned' young people was finalized never again to waver."[121] Regarding Divine guidance, Don Bosco understood that it was his mission to continue the work of the oratory under completely new circumstances after leaving the Pastoral Institute. This mission was inspired by the dream.[122]

Serving youth with the help of the community and under Marian guidance are also significant elements of motivation within Don Bosco's charism. This dream became the foundational inspiration for forming a congregation dedicated to carrying forward his charism. Although managing the oratory was initially his personal responsibility, it would later evolve into a collective responsibility, ultimately embodied in the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

[121] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Vocation-Mission Dream - Its Recurrence and Significance," 102.

[122] *Ibid.*, 101.

4. The Dream in Lanzo in 1876[123]

Don Bosco had a dream in Lanzo on December 6, 1876, which he shared during his "Good Night" talk,[124] in Valdocco on December 22 of the same year.[125] Sr. Cecilia Romero claimed that this dream concerning youth was always held in high regard.[126] In particular, the dream reflected Don Bosco's concern for the spiritual well-being of the youth, as he stated in his "Good Night" talk: "If you should happen to find something in this dream that is beneficial to your soul, make good use of it."[127]

Certainly, ethics played a central role in this dream. This is symbolized by a bouquet of flowers, encouraging the young to reflect on the path to entering paradise while also raising their awareness of how sin was corrupting the Oratory.[128]

We propose dividing this Lanzo dream into six parts: (1) A Heavenly Garden: Some Salesians and St. Dominic Savio appear in a heavenly garden.[129] (2) St. Dominic Savio's Enlightenment: With the brilliance of his appearance and attire, St.

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[123] BM, vol. 12, 431-441. Fr. Eugenio Ceria (1870-1957) was the author of *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco,* vols. 11-19, *Don Bosco con Dio*, the biographies of St. Mary Mazzarello, Blessed Michael Rua, Blessed Philip Rinadi, and many other outstanding Salesians.

[124] DBHS, vol. 3, 147-148. The "Good night" was in effect the last fatherly / motherly word of the day, before the family retired for the night. It is this very special quality, and only this, that makes the "Good night" the key to good moral conduct, to the good running of the house, and to success in the work of education. See also R, 48: "In keeping with the Salesian tradition, the rector or someone in his place should address the community by way of a 'good-night', preferably after evening prayer."

[125] DBD, 5. According to Fr. Stella's study, the dream in Lanzo occurred on the night of 6-7 December 1876, but Don Bosco mentioned the dream happening on 6 December, according to Fr. Ceria's recording.

[126] Cecilia Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco* (Torino: Elle Di Ci, 1978), 39. In her book, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, Sr. Cecilia Romero contributed a critical study of ten dream narratives of Don Bosco based on archival manuscripts, which were recorded by the early Salesians, and reviewed and corrected back then by Don Bosco himself. Her study of Don Bosco's dreams is worthy to refer to as well.

[127] BM, vol. 12, 432.

[128] DBD, 7.

[129] BM, vol. 12, 433. "As I listened enthralled to that heavenly choir I saw an endless multitude of boys approaching me. Many I recognized as having been at the Oratory and in our other schools, but by far the majority of them were total strangers to me. Their endless ranks drew closer, headed by Dominic Savio, who was followed immediately by Fr. Alasonatti, Fr. Chiala, Fr. Giulitto and many, many other clerics and priests, each leading a squad of boys." St. Dominic Savio, Don Bosco's saintly pupil, was born in 1842 and entered the Oratory of St. Francis de sales in October 1854. He founded the Company of Mary Immaculate in 1856. He died on 9 March 1856. Pope Pius XII canonized him in 1954.

Dominic Savio answers questions and explains the happiness of heaven to Don Bosco.[130] (3) The Bouquet of Virtues: Savio identifies the Salesian garden in heaven and presents a bouquet of flowers that symbolize various virtues.[131] (4) A Prophetic Warning: "Six and then two more" of those dearest to St. John Bosco are foretold to die.[132] (5) A Vision of Glory: A dawn of glory for the Salesian Society is witnessed, with its splendor reaching the four corners of the earth, alongside a vision of Pope Blessed Pius IX, seen as having only a few battles left to fight on earth.[133] (6) The Lists of Boys: St. Dominic Savio presents three lists containing the names of specific

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[130] *Ibid.*, 434. "Dominic Savio stepped forward a pace or two……His garments were altogether unique. The snow-white tunic which he wore down to his feet was studded with diamonds, and there were threads of gold running through it. About his waist was fastened a broad red sash, so thickly embroidered with precious gems that they almost overlapped each other, and sewn into such a charming design with such brilliance of colors that, just looking at them……From his neck hung a necklace woven of exotic into stems of gold……Those flowers flashed with a preternatural sparkle brighter than the very sun, which was then brilliantly burning in all the glory of a spring morning……A crown of roses encircled his head. His hair fell down in waves to his shoulders, giving him such a handsome and lovely charm that……he seemed an angel!.....'Ah, that defies all telling. The happiness of heaven no mortal beings can ever know until they die and are reunited to their Maker. We enjoy God—nothing else.'"

[131] *Ibid.*, 437-438. Dominic Savio said, "Do you see what is written at the gateway of that garden?" Don Bosco said, "I do. It says 'Salesian Garden.'" Savio went on, "Well then, those who are there were all Salesians or Salesian pupils. They were saved by you or your priests and clerics. Or they are those whom you directed on the path of their vocation……there would be a hundred million times more if you only had greater faith and trust in the Lord." ……
Savio held out a gorgeous bouquet of roses, violets, sunflowers, gentians, lilies, evergreens, perennials, and springs of wheat……
"The rose is the symbol of charity, the violet of humility, the sunflower of obedience, the gentian of penance and self-denial, and the wheat stalks of frequent Communion. Then, the lily stands for the beautiful virtue of chastity of which it is written: *Erunt sicut angeli dei in caelo* (They shall be like God's angels in heaven). Finally, the evergreens and perennials tell you that these virtues must endure forever. They denote perseverance."

[132] *Ibid.* "In the coming year of 1877, you will have a painful sorrow to endure. Six and then two more of those dearest to you will be summoned into eternity. But be confirmed, for they will be transplanted from this world to the gardens of heaven. They will receive their crown. And do not be worried, for the Lord will be your help and will give you other good sons."

[133] *Ibid*. "The Lord is preparing great things for you. In the coming year your Congregation will see a dawn of glory so resplendent that it will light up the four corners of the earth. A great splendor lies in the offing. But see to it that the Lord's chariot is not led by your Salesians off its course, out of its set path. If your priests will guide it in a manner worthy of their lofty calling, the future of your Congregation will be most glorious and will bring salvation to endless multitudes of people. There is but one condition: that your sons be devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary and that all of them learn to preserve the virtue of chastity which so delights God."
"All I can tell you is that the Church's shepherd will not have much longer to do battle here on earth. Few are the combats he must still win. Soon he will be taken from his see and the Lord will grant him his well-earned reward……"

boys.[134]

4.1 The Analysis of the Dream

4.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

The novenas of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and Christmas were possibly significant to this dream. Don Bosco stated that he had this dream on December 6, 1876, during the novena of the Immaculate Conception. It appears that the practice of spiritual nosegays was incorporated into each day of this novena in Don Bosco's Oratory.[135] For example, on the evening of December 3, 1868, Don Bosco presented the virtue of modesty as a spiritual nosegay to the youth.[136] Evidently, there was a strong connection between spiritual nosegays and flowers, which may explain the prominence of flowers in this dream.

The novena of Christmas is another noteworthy element. After the night prayer on December 22, 1876, Don Bosco delivered a "Good Night" talk during day seven of the novena. In this address, he shared the Lanzo dream while expressing his concern

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[134] *Ibid.*, 440-441. "The boys whom Divine Providence has entrusted to your care can be divided into three groups. Take a look at these three sheets of paper."

"I looked at the first. It bore one word: *Invulnerati*, unscathed, that is, those whom the devil had not been able to harm, those who had never lost their baptismal innocence. There was a great number of them and I saw them all……"

"Savio then handed me a second sheet. It bore the word: *Vulnerati*, wounded, that is, those who had fallen into sin but had risen to their feet again, healed of their wounds after repentance and confession. Their number was considerably greater than the first……"

"Savio still held a third sheet in his hand, labeled: *Lassati in via iniquitatis*, exhausted on the path of iniquity. (Ws 5:7) It bore the names of all those boys who at that moment were in the state of sin……

I opened it. I saw no names, but in an instant there flashed before my eyes all the lads therein mentioned, just as real as if they were standing there in front of me. With great grief I saw all of them……Then, as I opened that note, an unbearable stench emanated from it……"

[135] Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. Allan Ross (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2009), 83. St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was a Bishop of Geneva and is revered as a saint in the Catholic Church. He became noted for his deep faith and his gentle approach to the religious divisions in his land resulting from the Protestant Reformation. He explained the meaning of spiritual nosegays: "To all this I have added that one should gather a little nosegay of devotion. My meaning is as follows: Those who have been walking in a beautiful garden do not leave it willingly without taking away with them four or five flowers, in order to inhale their perfume and carry them about during the day: even so, when we have considered some mystery in meditation, we should choose one or two or three points in which we have found most relish, and which are specially proper to our advancement, in order to remember them throughout the day, and to inhale their perfume spiritually. Now we should do this in the place where we are, or walking about alone for a little while afterwards."

[136] BM, vol. 9, 198-199.

about the salvation of youth.[137] This concern seems to align with the "O" Antiphon of the novena:[138] "*O Rex gentium, et desideratus earum, lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum: veni et salva hominem, quem de limo formasti*."[139] The yearning for salvation expressed in the antiphon mirrors Don Bosco's concern for the spiritual well-being of his boys. It is likely that this antiphon inspired him to share the Lanzo dream with the boys in the Oratory, urging them to take responsibility for their souls.

Additionally, St. Dominic Savio, Fr. Alasonatti, Fr. Chiala, and Fr. Giulitto are significant figures in this dream and will be discussed further.[140] Don Bosco was well-acquainted with Lanzo, where, in 1864, he had established the first municipal Salesian boarding school. This school was one of his favorites, and he visited it frequently. Over time, it became a training ground for some of his most dedicated followers. Furthermore, retreats and other formation activities were often held at this school.[141]

4.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

The Lanzo dream is filled with vivid scenarios that warrant further elaboration. One of these involves a multitude of people. Don Bosco described them as follows: "I looked upon a multitude of people enjoying themselves happily, some singing, others

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[137] *Ibid.*, vol. 12, 440. In this Lanzo dream, Don Bosco said: "I have one more question: Are all my boys on the path of salvation? Tell me how to guide them."

[138] Henry Hugh, "O Antiphons," *New Advent*, accessed 28 February 2020, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11173b.htm.
"The seven antiphons to the Magnificat in the ferial Office of the seven days preceeding the vigil of Christmas; so called because all begin with the interjection "O". Their opening words are: (1) "*O Sapientia*", (2) "*O Adonai*", (3) "*O Radix Jesse*", (4) "*O Clavis David*", (5) "*O Oriens*", (6) "*O Rex Gentium*", (7) "*O Emmanuel*". They are addressed to Christ under one or other of His Scriptural titles, and they conclude with a distinct petition to the coming Lord."

[139] *Liber Usualis: Missae Et Officii*, 342. O King of the gentiles and their desired One, the cornerstone that makes both one: come, and deliver man, whom You formed out of the dust of the earth.

[140] Besides significant events and persons as mentioned above, Don Bosco was also concerned about the Salesian Cooperators, the Sons of Mary Help of Christians, the second Salesian missionary expedition, the approval of Salesian Sister's constitutions, and so on, but these concerns were not significant to the dream in Lanzo, so that these issues are not studied in this research.

[141] DBHS, vol. 5, 58-60.

playing, but every voice, every note, had the effect of a thousand different instruments playing together."[142] This vision in the dream was brimming with joy, reminiscent of the spirit of the authentic festive oratory, and one could state that this joy was the result of holiness.

In contrast, at the end of the dream, when Don Bosco opened the note given to him by St. Dominic Savio that implicated boys in the oratory who were in a state of sin, the scene drastically changed: "An atrocious headache immediately seized me, and I felt so sick to my stomach that I thought I would die. The whole sky darkened, the vision vanished, and nothing was left of that wonderful sight."[143] This scene stood in stark opposition to holiness, representing the painful reality of sin.

St. Dominic Savio declared that the venue of the dream was the Salesian Garden—a place described as the abode of happiness, where one could experience pure joy and delight.[144] Don Bosco also heard people singing a song in the dream: "*Salus honor, gloria Deo Patri Omnipotenti … Auctor saeculi, qui erat, qui venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos in saecula saeculorum.* (Salvation, honor and glory to Almighty God the Father…the Creator who was, who is and who will come to judge the living and the dead forever and ever.)"[145]

This song appeared to reflect the glorification of God and the human response of faith. In the dream, St. Dominic Savio identified himself as God's ambassador, tasked with manifesting the guidance of the Holy Spirit in terms of God's initiative.[146] The dream underscored the humility with which Savio delivered the Divine message,

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[142] BM, vol. 12, 433.

[143] *Ibid.*, 441.

[144] *Ibid.*, 435 & 437.

[145] *Ibid.*

[146] *Ibid.*, 437.

emphasizing the theme of guidance.[147]

In response to Savio's message, Don Bosco declared: "I shall endeavor to have this faith and trust in the future."[148] This statement could be seen as an acknowledgment of his motivation to respond to God's initiative and align his work with Divine guidance.

St. Dominic Savio also stated in the dream: "The Church's destiny is in the hands of God, our Maker. I cannot tell you what He has determined in His infinite decrees. To himself alone He keeps such mysteries, and no heavenly creature can ever share that knowledge."[149] This statement is consistent with the teaching found in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt 24:36). This highlights the truth that God is the origin of both guidance and motivation, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between God's initiative and the human response of faith.

4.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

Regarding personal matters, Don Bosco deeply felt the loss of St. Dominic Savio, who passed away on March 9, 1857. Don Bosco, in his "Good Night" talks, recalled Savio three times before sharing this dream,[150] which strongly evidenced the close bond they shared. St. Dominic Savio was the founder of the Sodality of the

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[147] *Ibid.* "What could I ever tell you—I, a poor creature?" Savio said with the deepest humility. "From on high I was given the mission to speak with you. That is why I am here."

[148] *Ibid.*

[149] *Ibid.*, 439.

[150] *Ibid.*, 407-408, 419, 420-421. "The novena of All Saints suggested the topic for the 'Good Night' of 27 October 1876. He (Don Bosco) recalled the days of Dominic Savio, comparing them simply and effectively with their own time." On the evening of 28 November 1876, Don Bosco said: "I can still recall, as though it were today, the cheerful, angel-like face of Dominic Savio." Don Bosco reserved the evening of 3 December 1876 for a "Good Night" to the artisans and again recalled Dominic Savio: "Dominic Savio was exemplary in everything……You too, now, following Dominic Savio's example, should do your very best in this novena."

Immaculate Conception in 1856.[151] Subsequently, Don Bosco was likely inspired by the close relationship between the Immaculate Conception and Savio. Later, *The Life of Young Dominic Savio, a Pupil of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales,* was published by Don Bosco in 1878. This fifth edition of Savio's biography seemed to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Savio's death in 1877.[152] Importantly, the dream discussed occurred only a few months before the anniversary, further underlining how Don Bosco always remembered his saintly pupil and the significant connection Savio had to this dream.

Further, Fr. Alasonatti passed away at Lanzo in 1865, and Fr. Chiala and Fr. Giulitto died just a few months before the "Good Night" in which Don Bosco narrated this dream.[153] Don Bosco's grief over these losses may have contributed to the emergence of this dream.

In the dream, Don Bosco expressed a longing for paradise, asking Savio: "Might I be allowed to see a little supernatural light?"[154] He also inquired about his Oratory and Congregation, asking: "Tell me of the past, of the present, and of the future of our Oratory. Tell me something about my dear sons. Talk to me about my Congregation."[155] These questions reflected Don Bosco's deep concerns for the Oratory, his spiritual family, and his own mission. He even asked about the Church and Pope Blessed Pius IX—individuals and matters that constantly stayed in Don Bosco's thoughts.

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[151] DBHS, vol. 3, 190.

[152] *Ibid.*, 232-233.

[153] DBD, 6-7. Fr. Victor Alasonatti was the first economer of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales and the first perfect general of the Salesian Society. He died at Lanzo on 7 October 1865. Fr. Caesar Chiala made his profession on 26 September 1873 and was ordained on 4 October 1874. He died on 28 June 1876. Fr. Joseph Giulitto was ordained in June 1876 and died on 18 July of the same year.

[154] BM, vol. 12, 435.

[155] *Ibid.*, 437.

In the realm of extrasensory perception, the dream has been interpreted as telepathic, as it revealed the state of the boys' souls in the Oratory. It also demonstrated clairvoyance, as Savio served as an external source of revelation for Don Bosco, and precognition, as it foreshadowed the deaths of Pope Blessed Pius IX, six boys in the Oratory, and two Salesians.

Regarding the link between the dream and reality, the timing of the dream and the "Good Night" aligns with preparations for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and Christmas. Practices such as receiving the Sacrament of Confession, praying the novena, and practicing spiritual nosegay were common during this period. Consequently, the symbols in the dream naturally revolved around themes that were central to the Oratory at that period: virtue, sin, Confession, Communion, and more. Moreover, Don Bosco's profound biblical knowledge significantly influenced the content and symbols of the dream, as elaborated below.

In part 1 (the Salesian garden in heaven), Salesians and St. Dominic Savio appeared in the dream within a heavenly garden. This Salesian Garden was described as a place of grand beauty, filled with indescribable gardens, sweet music, an endless multitude of boys,[156] and the presence of Savio and a few Salesians.[157] These elements directly reflected Don Bosco's daily experiences at the Oratory.

The description of grand, indescribable gardens,[158] resembles the Garden of Eden,

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[156] *Ibid*. For Don Bosco, this was a usual phenomenon, especially during the solemnity's novena because the boys queued up to make Confession, which was his usual practice.

[157] *Ibid*.

[158] *Ibid.*, 432-433. "Broad imposing avenues divided the plain into grand gardens of indescribable beauty, each broken up by thickets, lawns, and flower beds of varied shapes and colors……The very grass, the flowers, the trees, the fruit—all were of singular and magnificent beauty……Scattered throughout those gardens and spread over the entire plain I could see countless buildings whose architecture, magnificence, harmony, grandeur and size were so unique that one could say all the treasures of earth not suffice to build a single one."

planted by God.[159] Cirlot explained that a garden represents a place of order, selection, and consciousness, as opposed to the forest, which is symbolic of the unconscious.[160] On a spiritual level, we could suggest that the depiction of the grand gardens reflected Don Bosco's ideal view of a perfect Oratory, for example, a big place for boys,[161] the atmosphere of joy,[162] praising God,[163] and so on.

As for the sweet music, Cirlot observed that music symbolizes the cosmos's ordered nature and serves as a medium for communication and Divine expression.[164] Similarly, the music in the dream seemed to carry a Divine message.[165] Other symbols, such as the mound,[166] grass,[167] flowers,[168] trees,[169] and fruit[170] were also

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[159] "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Hav′ilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphra′tes" (Gn 2:8-14).

[160] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 115. See also, De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 252. De Vries stated that the symbol of garden is related to paradise, which means happiness, salvation, and purity.

[161] BM, vol. 12, 433. In this dream, Don Bosco said: "If only my boys had one such house, how they would love it, how happy they would be, and how much they would enjoy being there!"

[162] *Ibid*. "In those gardens I looked upon a multitude of people enjoying themselves happily, some singing, others playing……One could tell from the expressions of those happy faces that the singers not only took the deepest pleasure in singing, but also received vast joy in listening to the others……"

[163] *Ibid*. "And this was their song: *Salus, honor, gloria Deo Patri Omnipetenti…Auctor saeculi, qui erat, qui venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos in saecula saeculorum* (Salvation, honor and glory to Almighty God the Father…the Creator who was, who is and who will come to judge the living and the dead forever and ever)." This hymn is similar to the Creed we say in the Mass: "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible……He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

[164] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 223-224.

[165] BM, vol. 12, 433. "As I stood there basking in the splendor of those gardens, I suddenly heard music most sweet—so delightful and enchanting a melody that I could never adequately describe it……"

[166] See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 219. Cirlot stated that the symbol of the mound of earth is a sign in the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs in the form of a rectangle with two sides incomplete. It symbolizes the intermediate stages of matter, and is related to the symbols of primordial waters and of slime.

[167] See De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 269-270. De Vries described that the symbol of grass means death, which is not suitable to explain this dream of Don Bosco.

[168] See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 109-110. Cirlot claimed that flower-symbolism is broadly

mentioned in the dream and held spiritual significance.

In part 2 (St. Dominic Savio's enlightenment), St. Dominic Savio, radiating virtue and splendor, answered Don Bosco's questions and explained the happiness of heaven. His garment bore symbolic meaning,[171] resembling Joseph's long robe with sleeves in the Book of Genesis,[172] and the vestments of priests described in the Book of Exodus.[173] From these similarities, two concepts emerge: (1) The concept of the beloved son, inspired by Joseph's robe, and (2) The wholehearted service to God seen in the wearing of priestly vestments in the Old Testament. Don Bosco also identified further symbolic meanings in Savio's clothing: (1) The white, sparkling robe signified baptismal innocence, connected to the imagery in the Book of Revelation 7:14.[174] (2) "Dominic's blood-red sash was a symbol of penance, the great sacrifices, the strenuous efforts, and the near-martyrdom he had endured to preserve the virtue of

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characterized by two essentially different considerations: the flower in its essence, and the flower in its shape.

[169] See *Ibid.*, 349. Jung affirmed that the tree has a symbolic, bisexual nature, as can also been seen in the fact that, in Latin, the endings of the names of trees are masculine even though their gender is feminine. Obviously, this is not suitable for the explanation of Don Bosco's dream.

[170] See De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 248. De Vries claimed that the symbol of fruit means spiritual abundance or wisdom.

[171] BM, vol. 12, 434. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 253. De Vries described that the symbol of a garment refers to riches, knowledge, and so forth. Besides, he underlined in the Old Testament, a garment is often given as a pledge for a loan. He provided an example of Joseph's garment proving he had molested his master's wife. This is quite different from the explanation in the text of this present thesis.

[172] Regarding Joseph's long robe with sleeves, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a long robe with sleeves" (Gn 37:3).

[173] The vestments for the Priesthood recorded in the Book of Exodus was: "These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a girdle; they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet stuff, and fine twined linen. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet stuff, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked. It shall have two shoulder-pieces attached to its two edges, that it may be joined together. And the skillfully woven band upon it, to gird it on, shall be of the same workmanship and materials, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet stuff, and fine twined linen……you shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree. And you shall set the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel……And you shall make settings of gold filigree, and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings" (Ex 28:4-14).

[174] BM, vol. 12, 436. The Book of Revelation 7:14 was used to explain the shining whiteness of Dominic's robe: "*Ipsi habuerunt lumbos praecinctos et dealbaverunt stolas suas in sanguine Agni* (They have girded themselves and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb)."

purity,"[175] as echoed in the Book of Revelation 14:4.[176] Don Bosco described Savio as angelic, a depiction found in his "Good Night" talk on November 28, 1876, before this dream occurred.[177] This imagery reflected the general perception of Savio within the Oratory, particularly his chastity, which symbolized angelic purity.

In part 3 (the bouquet of virtues), St. Dominic Savio pointed out the Salesian Garden in heaven, and presented a bouquet of flowers to Don Bosco, which included "a gorgeous bouquet of roses, violets, sunflowers, gentians, lilies, evergreens, perennials, and sprigs of wheat"[178] Each flower represented a virtue, such as:[179] charity, humility, obedience, penance and self-denial, frequent Communion, chastity, and perseverance. It seemed that these virtues related closely to the spiritual nosegay practices of the Solemnity's novena in the Oratory, as described earlier.

In part 4 (a prophetic warning), Savio revealed that "six, and then two more" of

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[175] *Ibid*. See also, Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 54. Cirlot claimed that the color red means passion, sentiment, and the life-giving principle. This is similar to the understanding in the dream to some degree. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 466-467. De Vries elaborated that the color red means blood, war, crime, revenge, martyrdom, and anger. These explanations are not quite suitable to explain the meaning in Don Bosco's dream.

[176] The Book of Revelation 14:4 was used to explain Dominic's blood-red sash, "*Virgines enim sunt et sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit* (They are virgins and follow the Lamb wherever He Goes)."

[177] BM, vol.12, 419.

[178] *Ibid.*, 437-438. In this dream, "*Erunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo* (They shall be like God's angels in heaven)" was used to explain the meaning of Lily (the beautiful virtue of chastity). This explanation was similar to the Gospel of St. Matthew 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

[179] *Ibid.*, 437-438. Savio held out a gorgeous bouquet of roses, violets, sunflowers, gentians, lilies, evergreens, perennials, and springs of wheat……He said: "The rose is the symbol of charity, the violet of humility, the sunflower of obedience, the gentian of penance and self-denial, and the wheat stalks of frequent Communion. Then, the lily stands for the beautiful virtue of chastity of which it is written: *Erunt sicut angeli dei in caelo* (They shall be like God's angels in heaven). Finally, the evergreens and perennials tell you that these virtues must endure forever. They denote perseverance." Cf. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 54. Cirlot explained that the symbol of rose means completion, consummate achievement and perfection. Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 595. De Vries considered that the symbol of violet means spring-revival, mourning, love, faithfulness, modesty, and humble life. Cf. *Ibid.*, 545. The same author stated that the symbol of a sunflower means worship, infatuation, glory, solar wheel, and gratitude. Cf. *Ibid.*, 257. De Vries claimed that the symbol of gentian means autumn and loveliness. Cf. *Ibid.*, 606. De Vries affirmed that wheat is the symbol of all agriculture and fertility. Besides, this implicates abundance, harvest, and death. Cf. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 188-189. Cirlot stated that lily is an emblem of purity, which is echoing the meaning in the dream of Don Bosco. Besides, he explained that lily is a sign of royalty. In addition, Cirlot and De Vries did not present any explanation of evergreens and of perennials.

those dearest to Don Bosco would die.[180] While the vision of death was sorrowful, the number eight (six plus two) carries biblical meaning as a symbol of joy, resurrection,[181] and a new beginning.[182] For example, the Eight Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-11), and Christ's resurrection on the eighth day signify renewal and hope.

Despite its sorrowful nature, the prophecy carried comfort, as Savio said: "But be comforted, for they will be transplanted from this world to the gardens of heaven. They will receive their crown. And do not be worried, for the Lord will be your help and will give you other good sons."[183]

In part 5 (a vision of glory), the dawn of glory for the Salesian Society and its splendor would be seen in the four corners of the earth,[184] while Pope Blessed Pius IX would have only a few more battles to fight on earth. The phrase "four corners" signified the entire world, according to the understanding of the Book of Revelation.[185]

De Vries used another term, cornerstone, to interpret a similar meaning. He stated that the symbol of the cornerstone represents something fundamental, of primary

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[180] DBD, 24. The list of the dead at the oratory in 1877 was, (1) the boy John Briatore, (2) the boy Victor Strolengo, (3) the boy Stephen Mazzoglio, (4) the boy Natale Garola, (5) the boy Anthony Bagnati, and (6) the domestic Louis Boggiatto. Two deceased Salesians in 1877 were, (1) the cleric Michael Viovannetti, and (2) the cleric Charles Becchio.

[181] "Numbers, Religious," *Catholic Culture*, accessed 29 February 2020, https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=35179. Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 193. De Vries elaborated the number eight as meaning regeneration, a new beginning, eternity, endlessness, perfection, and splendor. It seems that these explanations are in harmony with the meaning suggested in the text of this present research.

[182] Mary Fairchild, "Explore the Symbolism of Numbers in the Bible," *Learn Religions*, accessed 14 September 2018, https://www.learnreligions.com/biblical-numerology-700168.

[183] BM, vol. 12, 439.

[184] DBD, 20-21. According to Fr. Stella's study, the dawn of glory for the Salesian Society included the First General Chapter in Lanzo, the second missionary expedition, the cooperators initiated in 1874 and the Sons of Mary Help of Christians promoted since 1875, and the Rules for Salesian Houses which were published.

[185] "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree" (Rv 7:1).
"And will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea" (Rv 20:8).

importance, and providing security and stability.[186] These explanations echo Psalm 118: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (Ps 118:22).

Furthermore, Pope Blessed Pius IX was symbolized by the "Church's shepherd" mentioned by St. Dominic Savio in this dream.[187] Regarding the symbol of a shepherd, its meaning as interpreted by Cirlot and De Vries (as discussed previously), is now examined. Cirlot and De Vries provided their interpretations with a focus on analyzing myths. However, their approach is not entirely appropriate for explaining the meaning within this dream of Don Bosco.

In part 6 (the lists of boys), Savio showed Don Bosco three sheets of paper, each listing specific boys in the Oratory. The "three sheets of paper" referred to three groups of boys.[188] Broadly speaking, the boys were naturally categorized into three groups: excellent, good, and poor.[189] This system of grouping was applied in the dream.

De Vries elaborated that the number three signifies divinity, perfection, completion, and sufficiency. Moreover, he considered the number three as a symbol of the intellectual or spiritual world. This number also implies the resolution of conflicts, biological synthesis, and conscious spiritual values.[190]

De Vries's interpretation, however, differs from the use of the number three in Don Bosco's dream, where it is employed to differentiate three levels of morality and sanctity among the boys in the Oratory. The categories described as *Invulnerati*,

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[186] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 140.

[187] BM, vol. 12, 439.

[188] Fairchild, "Explore the Symbolism of Numbers in the Bible," https://www.learnreligions.com/biblical-numerology-700168. The number three signifies completion or perfection, and unity. Three is the number of Persons in the Trinity.

[189] Jon Mueller, "Rubrics", *Authentic Assessment Toolbox*, 2018, accessed 31 October 2020, http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/rubrics.htm.

[190] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 564-565.

Vulnerati, and *Lassati in via inquitatis* were used to label these levels. These groups represented: (1) Those who never lost their baptismal innocence. (2) Those who had fallen into sin but had risen again, healed of their wounds after repentance and confession. (3) Those who were exhausted and lost on the path of iniquity.[191]

The dream addressed four key spiritual themes, as portrayed in the Divine message of the dream: (1) Divine encouragement to practice virtues, symbolized by a gorgeous bouquet of flowers.[192] (2) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, emphasized by St. Dominic Savio.[193] (3) Preservation of the virtue of chastity, focused on pleasing God.[194] (4) A reminder of conversion, shown through the three sheets of paper signifying the three groups of boys.[195] These four spiritual themes were intended to enhance personal and spiritual perfection, fostering openness to God for the sake of union with Him. Additionally, in his "Good Night" address on December 22, 1876, Don Bosco reflected on the dream, saying: "I began to call in some boys and soon realized that my dream was no dream but, rather, a very special favor of God that enabled me to know each one's state of soul."[196]

This statement underscores the significance of this dream in addressing the spiritual welfare of the boys in the Oratory. Inspired by Divine providence, this revelation was instrumental in fostering the boys' openness to God and deepening their union with Him.

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[191] BM, vol. 12, 440. *Invulnerati*, unscathed. *Vulnerati*, wounded. *Lassati in via inquitatis,* the Book of Wisdom 5:7 was used to explain the Latin words: "We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction, and we journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we have not known."

[192] *Ibid.*, 438. St. Dominic Savio said: "Give this bouquet to your sons so that, when the time comes, they may offer it to the Lord……"

[193] *Ibid.*, 439. St. Dominic Savio said: "There is but one condition: that your sons be devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary and that all of them learn to preserve the virtue of chastity which so delights God."

[194] *Ibid*.

[195] *Ibid*., 441. Don Bosco narrated: "……A very special favor of God that enabled me to know each one's state of soul."

[196] *Ibid*., 433.

4.1.4 The Consequences

After this dream, Don Bosco carefully reviewed it and focused on self-reflection and meditation on the Divine message before sharing it with the boys in the Oratory. As Fr. Ceria explained Don Bosco's rationale: "He delayed two weeks before narrating it, and only then, when he felt quite sure that it had come from above, did he speak. Then, as its predictions were fulfilled, time would corroborate its message."[197]

Certainly, the salvation of the boys was a primary concern for Don Bosco; hence, he became a Divine messenger or ambassador, delivering God's message to the boys—much like the role of St. Dominic Savio in this dream.[198]

Additionally, regarding the fulfillment of the predictions in this dream, this aspect has not been addressed in the present research. Instead, this study has focused on analyzing the content of Don Bosco's dreams to inspire personal and spiritual growth.

4.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

The significant elements in this dream align with those in previous dreams. Marian devotion, preserving the virtue of chastity, acknowledging the ugliness of sin, and practicing virtues are affirmed as central themes in this dream. Furthermore, based on these findings, a model of spirituality can be proposed: one may progress toward heaven by frequently receiving the Sacraments of Communion and Confession, fostering devotion to Our Lady, practicing virtues, and avoiding sin. In this model, the Salesians are inspired and guided to educate and nurture youth to embrace and practice these virtues in order to follow Jesus Christ.

The Salesians serve the youth as Divine messengers, responding to Divine will. Consequently, the spiritual education provided by the Salesians should radiate fatherly

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[197] *Ibid*., 441.

[198] *Ibid.*, 437. St. Dominic Savio said: "……Besides, *legatione Dei fungor* (I am God's ambassador)."

care as they fulfill their roles as both pastors and educators[199] This approach reflects the ideal image of a Salesian, imitating Jesus Christ.

[199] Cf. C, 98. The formation experience: "……With the help of Mary, his Mother and Teacher, he gradually becomes a pastor and educator of the young in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced."

5. The Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879[200]

This dream narrated on May 9, 1879, was about fierce battles between youths and a varied array of warriors and has been interpreted as symbolizing the problem of vocations and its impact on the Salesian Society.[201] Although the date of Don Bosco's narration was recorded, the exact date on which the dream occurred remains unclear.

Regarding the content of the dream, three parts can be identified: Part 1 involves two battles between young men and warriors;[202] Part 2 depicts victory achieved by following Jesus Crucified and the Blessed Virgin Mary alone;[203] and Part 3 features a character with the face of St. Francis de Sales in a very pleasant garden, discussing the duty of the Salesians,[204] ways to promote vocations,[205] and the future of the congregation.[206] After these three scenes, the dream was interrupted by a sudden

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[200] BM, vol. 14, 88-90.

[201] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 51 & 53.

[202] BM, vol. 14, 88. "(I saw) a hard-fought, long-drawn-out battle between youngsters and a varied array of warriors who were armed with strange weapons. Survivors were few. A second fiercer and more terrifying battle was being waged by gigantic monsters fully armed, well-trained tall men who unfurled a huge banner, the center of which bore an inscription in gold, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum*. The combat was long and bloody, but the soldiers fighting under the banner were protected against harm and conquered a vast plain."

[203] *Ibid*. "The boys who had survived the previous battle linked forces with them, each combatant holding a crucifix in his right hand and a miniature of the banner in his left."

[204] *Ibid*., 88-89. "……Then I found myself in a charming garden. A man who looked like St. Francis de Sales silently handed me a booklet……I opened it, but had trouble reading, managing only to make out these precise words:

For the Novices: Obedience in all things. Through obedience they will deserve God's blessings and the good will of men. Through diligence they will fight and overcome the snares set by the enemies of their souls.

For the Confreres: Jealousy safeguard the virtue of chastity. Love your confrere's good name, promote the honor of the Congregation.

For the Directors: Take every care, make every effort to observe and promote observance of the rules through which everyone's life is consecrated to God."

For the Superior: Total self-sacrifice, so as to draw himself and his charges to God."

[205] *Ibid*., 89. St. Francis de Sales said: "The Salesians will harvest many vocations by their good example, of being endlessly kind towards their pupils, and by urging them constantly to receive the Holy Communion often."

[206] *Ibid.* Don Bosco asked: "Will the Congregation grow?" St. Francis de Sales said: "It will reach out so that no one will be able to check its growth, as long as the superiors meet their obligations." Don Bosco asked: "Will it have a long life?" The patron Saint answered: "Yes, but only as long as its members love work and temperance. Should either of these two pillars fall, your entire edifice will collapse and crush superiors, subjects and followers beneath it."

storm, during which horrid monsters rushed toward Don Bosco, causing him to wake up.[207]

5.1 The Analysis of the Dream

5.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

The expansion of the Salesian Society was one of the significant topics related to this dream. In Italy, during the 1870s, several new houses were established for the society, including Vallecrosia (1875-1876), La Spezia (December 1877), Mathi (1877), Lucca (mid-1878), San Benigno Canavese (August 1879), and Randazzo (October 1879).[208] Furthermore, the construction of St. John the Evangelist's Church was underway in the late 1870s.[209]

Beyond the growth in Italy, the Salesian presence in southern France also began around this time, with establishments in places such as Nice (November 1875), La Navarre (July 1878), and Marseilles (July 1878).[210] These new Salesian houses were influenced, to some degree, by this dream in terms of Salesian vocations and missions.

Additionally, alongside the Salesian growth in Europe, Don Bosco was deeply concerned about the Salesian missions in South America. Four Missionary Expeditions were conducted during his later years,[211] with the fourth group being sent on 8 December 1878.[212] These missions were also a focal point of Don Bosco's attention.

The challenge of vocations was another significant concern for St. John Bosco

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[207] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 51.

[208] DBHS, vol. 5, 364-367.

[209] *Ibid.*, 367-370. St. John the Evangelist's Church began with laying of the cornerstone on 14 August 1878, and the Church was consecrated on 28 October 1882 by Archbishop Lorenzon Gastaldi.

[210] *Ibid.*, 360.

[211] The first Salesian Missionary Expedition, the second group and the third group were sent on 11 November 1875, 7 November 1876 and 7 November 1877 respectively.

[212] DBHS, vol. 6, 83-84.

during this period. At the annual conference of St. Francis de Sales in Alassio, held on February 6–8, 1879,[213] fostering of vocations was a key topic of discussion.[214] It is evident that the issue of vocations not only occupied Don Bosco's thoughts at the time but also played a significant role in the themes of his dream.

5.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

The dream mentioned several fierce battles between youths and a varied array of warriors. The youth were portrayed holding a crucifix in their right hand and a miniature banner in their left hand, and they ultimately emerged victorious in these battles. These scenes appear to symbolize the role of humility, docility to the Divine will, the aid of Jesus Christ, and the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians.

Afterward, in the dream, Don Bosco consulted St. Francis de Sales about matters related to vocations, the Salesians, their congregation, and their foreign missions. These consultations, it seems, were implicitly connected to the themes of guidance and motivation to follow God's will. During these consultations, Don Bosco also expressed his willingness to respond to the Divine will.

Later in the dream, St. Francis de Sales described the state of the Salesian Society with these words: "Many roses and joys are in store, but very sharp thorns also threaten."[215] This statement likely refers to the interplay of joy and the sacrifices inherent in the Salesian charism. St. Francis de Sales' appearance in the dream seems

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[213] *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 59-61. The annual conferences of St. Francis de Sales were held on or around the feast of St. Francis de Sales (29 January in those days), which were participated by the confreres of the Oratory at Valdocco, and the directors of the other houses.

[214] BM, vol. 14, 24-29. "Some excellent ways of arousing or safeguarding a priestly vocation or even kindling a desire to become a Salesian are:

1. Treat boys with kindness.
2. Be kind to one another. No boy will want to become a Salesian if he sees that we do not treat each other kindly, bicker among ourselves, and are critical of the superior's directives.
3. Another effective means is to foster an understanding and an appreciation of our regulations and of the deliberations of the Lanzo general chapter (1877)."

Certainly, receiving Communion and Confession frequently were emphasized in this conference.

[215] BM, vol. 14, 90.

to emphasize his role as a guide regarding God's initiative, as he stated: "I have been sent to tell you of future events."[216]

At the conclusion of Don Bosco's narration of this dream, he affirmed: "In all things let honor and glory be given to God forever and ever."[217] This suggests that Don Bosco was consistently motivated by a desire to seek the glory of God. Furthermore, he instilled this same attitude in his spiritual sons and the boys in the oratory.

5.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

The significant events described above have a close relationship with this dream regarding personal issues. There was serious conflict between Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi[218] and Don Bosco in the 1870s and 1880s.[219] Nonetheless, it seems that this conflict was not directly related to the dream and, therefore, this issue will not be studied in the present research.

However, there were other issues troubling Don Bosco. In this dream, he appeared to reflect on the completion of his life journey and the future of his congregation. Considering his old age, Don Bosco seemed to interpret his daily existence through the symbol of a coffin in the dream, signifying his eventual demise. From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream can be interpreted as precognition because it predicted Don Bosco's death. It is also linked to clairvoyance, as St. Francis de Sales appeared in the dream to remind Don Bosco of the importance of vocations and the role of the Salesian Society.

In terms of the correlation between the dream's content and reality, numerous

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[216] *Ibid.*, 89.

[217] *Ibid.*, 90.

[218] Archbishop Lorzenzo Gastaldi (1815-1883) was the Bishop of Saluzzo in 1867-1870, and the Archbishop of Turin in 1871-1883.

[219] DBHS, vol. 7, 159-160.

symbols and explanations are presented, some of which occur in other dreams of Don Bosco. In Part 1, two battles are described between young men and warriors. The term "battle" is used symbolically to represent youth fighting against the devil, similar to "the Archangel Michael defeating the Dragon" in the Book of Revelation 12:7-9.[220] However, detailed interpretations of the "battle" symbol were not elaborated on by authors such as Cirlot and De Vries. Cirlot did mention that the symbol of warriors represents latent forces within a personality assisting the consciousness. If the warriors are hostile, they signify antagonistic forces aligned with the framework of the personality.[221] This latter explanation seems relevant to interpreting this dream. Furthermore, the symbol of battles also appears in the Message to Pius IX in 1873.[222]

The "huge banner with the inscription, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum*" in the dream emphasized Marian protection.[223] This symbol, inspired by the Month of May,

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[220] "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Rv 12:7-9).

[221] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 364.

[222] BM, vol. 10, 55-57. In the Message to Pius IX in 1873, this dream was called the "Second Prophecy" in terms of a continuous episode of three dreams by Fr. Angelo Amadei (1868-1945) who succeeded Fr. Lemoyne in 1908 as the editor of the Salesian Bulletin and at the same time he was the author of *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco* vol. 10. In this prophecy, the date and the venue were not mentioned, but it bore the date, 24 May – 24 June 1873, in the original manuscript. In the recording of Fr. Amadei, a note appended by Don Bosco was presented after this second prophecy: "The person reporting these things is the same who unerringly predicted what happened in France a year before it took place. These predictions were widely known and were fulfilled day by day, as if a script was being followed……" This was considered a strong evidence showing the close relationship between the Prophecy in 1870 and this dream. Hence, it was appropriate to name this theoretical sampling as the "Second Prophecy", which consisted of direct guidance. It seems certain that the message of this prophecy was delivered to Pope Blessed Pius IX, and according to the study of Fr. Stella, the intermediary, would have been Dominic Cardinal Bartolini.

Obviously, Pope Blessed Pius IX was the main focus of this prophecy, and his exile and return with his followers was the main theme. It was divided into three parts, first, the pope left the Vatican and Rome accompanied by a throng of men, women, children, monks, nuns, and priests for a 200-day march. Second, a banner bearing the inscriptions: "Queen conceived without sin" and "Help of Christians," was offered to the pope by two angels. Afterwards, he was advised to return with his followers and the movement of evangelizing the world was started. Third, this pope returned to Rome, and offered thanks in St Peter's Basilica with his followers. Eventually, the darkness vanished and the sun began to shine.

[223] BM, vol. 14, 88.

suggests Marian devotion and the Feast of Mary, Help of Christians, both celebrated in the same month. Such devotion was a common Catholic practice in May. This banner symbol also appears in three other dreams: the Another Dream in 1844, the Prophecy in 1870,[224] and the Message to Pius IX in 1873. De Vries noted that a banner symbolizes honor and triumph over death,[225] making this interpretation appropriate for the dream's context. Alongside these symbols, representations of weapons[226] and monsters[227] also feature.[228]

In Part 2, victory was depicted as achievable only by following Jesus Crucified and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The depiction of boys each "holding a crucifix in his right hand and a miniature of the banner in his left" symbolized this belief, which later

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[224] BM, vol. 10, 51-55. In the 1870s the Franco-German War was the political context in which Don Bosco was working. He was in his middle age, and his congregation was growing in Turin, Piedmont, and Liguria, which was approved by the Church in 1869, with its constitutions approved in 1874.

As declared by Don Bosco, the Prophecy in 1870, this dream took place on the vigil of the Epiphany in 1870 in Rome. This dream has a close relationship with the other two prophecies: (1) the Message to Pius IX in 1873, and (2) the Message to the Emperor of Austria in 1873. These prophecies were about the political and religious events between 1870 and 1874, and were presented as a series of related and repeated dreams. According to the recordings of Fr. Lemoyne and Fr. Amadei, these prophecies were presented in letters to deliver Divine messages. Hence, it seemed that Don Bosco was considering the development of these events in these dreams, and similar to watching a movie.

The prophecy in 1870 could be divided into four parts: first, the "prediction of God's punishment on France-Paris through a threefold visitation, in the context of the disastrous Franco-German War." Second, the "vision of the warrior from the north meeting the Venerable Old Man of Latium." Third, the prophecy for Italy about the Divine righteous punishment, and that Rome would be visited four times by Divine punishments. In the meantime, the fall of Rome and the bloodshed were mentioned in the third visitation. Fourth, the message of hope, that the pope would be restored to his former status because of the help of the great Queen of Heaven. The ending of the reign of sin and the bringing of the rainbow of peace would happen before two full moons in the month of flowers.

[225] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 45.

[226] See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 367. In a purely psychological interpretation of the symbol, the enemy is simply the forces threatening the hero from within, the weapon becomes a genuine representation of a state of conflict. Jung summarizes this by saying that weapons are an expression of the will directed towards a certain end. These explanations are similar to the meaning in the dream.

[227] See *Ibid.*, 213. Cirlot stated that on the psychological plane, the symbol of monsters alludes to the base powers which constitute the deepest strata of spiritual geology, seething as in a volcano until they erupt in the shape of some monstrous apparition or activity. The fight against a monster signifies the struggle to free consciousness from the grip of the unconscious. Weapons, then, are the symbolic antithesis to monsters. These explanations are similar to the meaning in the dream. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 390.

[228] BM, vol. 14, 88. "(I saw) a hard-fought, long-drawn-out battle between youngsters and a varied array of warriors who were armed with strange weapons. Survivors were few. A second fiercer and more terrifying battle was being waged by gigantic monsters fully armed."

manifested in practice.[229] For instance, St. Dominic Savio, who founded the Immaculate Conception Sodality in 1856,[230] famously used a small crucifix to stop a fight between two classmates.[231] Similarly, Don Bosco's dream of the Two Columns in May 1862 also emphasized the protection of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.[232] As Don Bosco stated: "Only two things can save us in such a grave hour: devotion to Mary and frequent Communion. Let's do our very best to use these two means and have others use them everywhere."[233]

The dream also depicted boys dispersing in various directions,[234] reminiscent of

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[229] *Ibid.* See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 73. Cirlot explained that the symbolic meaning of the crucifixion seems to be related to the suffering which is at the root of all contradiction and ambivalence, especially if one bears in mind the practice in medieval iconography of showing Jesus on the cross surrounded by symmetrical pairs of objects or beings. Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 149. De Vries elaborated that the symbol of crucifixion means fire, suffering and existence.

[230] BM, vol. 5, 312-321. "……for several years the devil's agents occasionally showed up among the boys, especially when Don Bosco was away……one such messenger of evil was a morally corrupt but astute young man whose looks, suave manners, and entrancing words seemed to charm the boys. His mere presence acted like a magnet in drawing to him crowds of unwary youngsters, but the Immaculate Conception sodality members were on guard and discreetly steered them away from this serpent and others like him." It seemed that this narration was similar to the battles described in this dream.

[231] *Ibid.*, 174-180. (St. Dominic Savio) Taking a small crucifix which he used to wear around his neck, he held it up in his hand. "You must first look at this crucifix, and you must then throw the first stone at me and say: 'Jesus was innocent and died forgiving His murderers, but I, a sinner, am going to offend Him by bloody revenge.'"

He strode up to the angrier boy, knelt before him, and cried: "You start! Throw the first stone at me. Aim at my head!"

Completely stunned, the boys began to tremble……

Dominic then stood up and, in tones vibrant with emotion, exclaimed: "You are both ready to face danger to save me—a nobody. Yet to save your own souls, for which Christ died, you aren't even willing to overlook a stupid remark made at school. Don't you realize that you could lose your souls by committing this sin?" He stood there, silent, crucifix in hand, his eyes welling with tears.

This scenario was similar to Don Bosco's First Dream (nine or ten years old) in 1824 or 1825 that young John, in the dream, tried to stop those boys who were swearing by his words and fists.

[232] *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 108-109.

[233] *Ibid.*, 109.

[234] *Ibid.*, vol. 14, 88. "……After engaging together in several sallies over that vast plain, they split, some heading eastward, a few to the north, and many for the south. Once they all left, the same skirmishes, maneuvers and leave-takings were repeated by others."

According to Fr. Ceria, "west" was omitted in the text, but referring to *I Sogni Di Don Bosco* by Sr. Romero, "west" is included. At this point, we are not going to analyze because this present research is not focusing on the literature comparison.

Nevertheless, geographically speaking, a possible explanation on this omission in Fr. Ceria's recording is that there was no Salesian house in the west of Turin in 1879. Additionally, if we reflect on the view of the Gospel of St. Luke 1:78: "Through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high," we may pretend that the east refers to Divine providence, and the west

"The Order of Encampment and Marching" in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 2.[235] This symbolizes the congregation's expansion, influenced by biblical context, and reflects the growth of the Salesian Society during that period. Additional symbols, such as a shower of flashing lights and fiery tongues in many colors, were also described.[236]

In Part 3, St. Francis de Sales appeared in the dream, discussing the duties of the Salesians, fostering vocations, and the congregation's future amidst a charming garden. The symbol of the garden evoked confidence for the Salesian Society and was reminiscent of Don Bosco's Dream in Lanzo in 1876.

The appearance of St. Francis de Sales may be tied to two significant events: (1) His proclamation as a Doctor of the Church by Pope Blessed Pius IX on November 16, 1877,[237] which was well-known among the faithful during the late 1870s; (2) A fundraising letter Don Bosco received in May 1879 about building a shrine in honor of St. Francis de Sales. This initiative, undertaken by Mother Mary Louise Bartolezzi of the Visitation Nuns of Annecy in 1878, aimed to honor their founder.[238] It appears that

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refers to the evil. As a result, "west" might be omitted due to these reasons in the text by Fr. Ceria.

[235] "Those to encamp on the east side towards the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah by their companies, the leader of the people of Judah being Nahshon the son of Ammin′adab, his host as numbered being seventy-four thousand six hundred." (Nb 2:3-4)

"On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their companies, the leader of the people of Reuben being Eli′zur the son of Shed′eur, his host as numbered being forty-six thousand five hundred." (Nb 2:10-11)

"On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of E′phraim by their companies, the leader of the people of E′phraim being Elish′ama the son of Ammi′hud, his host as numbered being forty thousand five hundred." (Nb 2:18-19)

"On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their companies, the leader of the people of Dan being Ahi-e′zer the son of Ammishad′dai, his host as numbered being sixty-two thousand seven hundred." (Nb 2:25-26)

[236] BM, vol. 14, 88. Don Bosco said: "Shortly afterwards I witnessed a shower of flashing, fiery tongues of many colors, followed by thunder and then clear skies." See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 571. De Vries stated that the symbol of tongues means eloquence and persuasion in love and war. Cirlot and De Vries did not mention any explanation of flashing.

[237] Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, USA, "St. Francis De Sales," *Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, USA*, 2021, accessed 19 December 2021, https://fransalians.us/pages/salesian-spirituality/st-francis-de-sales.html.

[238] BM, vol. 14, 261-262.

the spirit of St. Francis de Sales profoundly influenced Don Bosco,[239] inspiring him to remind his spiritual sons to emulate their patron saint's meekness and dedication to winning souls.[240] Additionally, the symbol of a booklet also appeared in this dream.[241]

Regarding the discussion between Don Bosco and St. Francis de Sales in Part 3, reminders concerning novices, confreres, directors, and superiors of the Salesian Society were presented via a booklet given by the saint in the dream.[242] Vocations, admitting members to vows, foreign missions, and the congregation's future were also addressed.[243] These subjects were likely inspired, to some extent, by Don Bosco's first audience with Pope Leo XIII on March 16, 1878.[244] During this audience, papal

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[239] *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 81. "Dominic Savio went to Don Bosco's room and stated his desire to entrust himself entirely to his superiors. His gaze fell upon a poster containing, in bold lettering, a favorite saying of St. Francis de Sales: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle* (Lord, give me souls; take away the rest.)……"

[240] *Ibid.*, 8. "On the evening of January 26, 1854, we gathered in Don Bosco's room. Present were Don Bosco, Rocchietti, Artiglia, Cagliero, and Rua. Don Bosco suggested that, with the help of the Lord and St. Francis de Sales, we should first test ourselves by performing deeds of charity towards our neighbor, then bind ourselves by a promise, and later, if possible and desirable, make a formal vow to God. From that evening on, those who agreed—or would later agree—to this were called 'Salesian'."

[241] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 31. Cirlot explained that the symbol of a book signifies the power to ward off evil spirits. This is in harmony with the meaning of the booklet presented by St. Francis de Sales in the dream.

[242] BM, vol. 14, 88. "The superior" was in a singular form, which might be pointing to Don Bosco himself.

[243] *Ibid.*, 89. For fostering vocations, "The Salesians will harvest many vocations by their good example, by being endlessly kind towards their pupils, and by urging them constantly to receive Holy Communion often."

For admitting novices, "Reject, idlers and gluttons."

For admitting to vows, "Make sure that they are well grounded in chastity."

For maintaining the right spirit in Salesian houses, "Let superiors very often write, visit and welcome the confreres, dealing kindly with them."

For the foreign missions, "Send men of sound morality and recall any who give you serious reason to doubt; look for and foster native vocations."

For the Congregation's future, "……as long as its members love work and have temperance. Should either of these two pillars fall, your entire edifice will collapse and crush superiors, subjects and followers beneath it."

[244] *Ibid.*, vol. 13, 384-389. Pope Leo XIII said: "Tell your Salesians, never to forget the great boon God has conferred on them in calling them to a Congregation where they can do so much good for themselves and their fellow men…..Tell your Salesians to study their rules and to strive to understand and practice them in an exemplary manner. Thus, to their great astonishment, they will see their numbers increase daily and they will save many souls……"

"As for your novices, let me use the figure of a fenced-in garden rich in exotic plants. How sad if the fence is thrown down, for thieves will rob the fruits and damage the plants. These novices represent the hopes of the Salesian Congregation; recommend to them seclusion and the virtues which they should practice throughout their lifetime……"

"In choosing missionaries, always give preference to those of proven virtue. This is a must for

advice was offered to the entire Salesian Society, including its pupils, cooperators, novices, and missionaries. This audience was a significant milestone for Don Bosco, as it was his first meeting with the new pope, a treasured memory he shared with his spiritual sons and pupils.

In the dream's last scene, symbols like a coffin, roses, and thorns are mentioned. The coffin, which frequently appeared in other dreams of Don Bosco, is a common symbol representing death; for example, one appeared in the dream about a death's messenger shared in the "Good Night" on March 21, 1862.[245] In this instance, it specifically referred to Don Bosco's own mortality. St. Francis de Sales highlighted the coffin symbol to remind Don Bosco of human mortality,[246] while urging him to inspire his followers to continue his charism. De Vries stated that the coffin is a symbol of putrefaction.[247] Ami Ronnberg observed that the coffin symbolizes the inescapable finality of death, burial, loss, and absence, and, in even more macabre representations, speaks of assailing worms and the restless dead.[248] Additionally, the coffin has been interpreted as being connected to dead matter that, through the dew of understanding, is reanimated and transformed into incorruptible gold.[249] Thus, in his

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Catholic missions……"

It seemed that these pieces of advice were related closely to this dream.

[245] *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 76-78. The Messenger said to a boy: "Look, do you see that coffin? It's for you! Quick, let's go!"

[246] *Ibid*., vol. 14, 90. Don Bosco narrated, "Just then four men showed up bearing a coffin and approaching me. 'Whom is that for?' I asked.

'For you.'

'How soon?'

'Do not ask. Just remember that you are mortal.'

'What are you trying to tell me with this coffin?'

'That while you are still living you must see to it that your sons practice what they must continue to practice after your death. This is the heritage, the testament you must bequeath to them; but you must work on it and leave it (to your sons) as a well-studied and well-tested legacy.'"

[247] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 133.

[248] Ami Ronnberg, ed., *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images* (Köln: Taschen, 2010), 756.

[249] *Ibid.*

old age, Don Bosco understood that the symbol of the coffin in his dream represented his impending death.

The symbols of roses and thorns,[250] also recurring motifs, appear in this dream. For instance, they were prominent in the Dream of the Rose Pergola in 1847 (narrated in 1864),[251] where the Blessed Virgin Mary explained:

> The roses symbolize the burning charity which must be your distinguishing trait and that of your fellow workers. The other thorns stand for the obstacles, sufferings and disappointments you will experience……. Charity and mortification will enable you to overcome all difficulties and lead you to roses without thorns.[252]

In exploring the symbolic expressions of roses and thorns, the supernatural elements in Don Bosco's dreams are often revealed. This sense of beauty may resonate with the meanings of charity and joy, as depicted in the Dream of the Rose Pergola in 1847. Ronnberg noted that roses are equally at home in the garden of paradise, tended by angels, or adorning an ornate Victorian valentine.[253] Meanwhile, Cirlot described thorns as symbols of the evil characteristics inherent in all things multiple.[254] This interpretation aptly conveys the distress and sorrow associated with the symbol of

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[250] BM, vol. 14, 90. Don Bosco asked: "Can we expect roses or thorns?" St. Francis de Sales replied: "Many roses and joys are in store, but very sharp thorns also threaten. They will cause all of you acute distress and sorrow. You must pray much."

[251] *Ibid*., vol. 3, 25-28.

[252] *Ibid*., 27.

[253] Ronnberg, ed., *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*, 164-166. The entire process of psychic transformation takes place sub rosa (under the rose). Denoting silence, the phrase purportedly originated in the story of Eros' gift of a rose to Harpocrates, the god of silence, in grateful recognition of his discretion regarding the illicit amours of Eros' mother Aphrodite. While the endearing qualities of roses are indisputable, so is their notorious thorniness. Literally, the prickles or thorns of roses are protective, dissuading predators from making a banquet of their delectable blooms; they may also serve as armored reservoirs to forestall dehydration in the stems, especially of those, like the desert rose, that live in hot climates. Although this suggests at a psychic level that a certain amount of thorniness is a positive attribute, thorns may also represent a prickly defensiveness that precludes intimacy. This explanation is not very closely related to the meaning in this dream.

[254] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 341. The thorn of the acacia, in particular, was regarded by the Egyptians as an emblem of the mother-goddess Neith. It is also related to the world-axis, and therefore to the cross. The thorn on the rose-bush helps to emphasize the counterpoise or "conjunction" between thesis and antithesis, that is, between the ideas of existence and non-existence, ecstasy and anguish, pleasure and pain; this again is related to the symbolism of the cross. Although this explanation is fruitful, it seems that it is not related closely to the meaning in this dream.

thorns in this dream.

In addition to the symbols of roses and thorns mentioned above, the dream also included the imagery of muffled thunder, flashes of lightning, and horrid monsters at its conclusion.[255]

Regarding spiritual matters, in the battles between youth and warriors, the appearance of boys holding a crucifix and a miniature Marian banner signifies the necessity for humans to seek the aid of Jesus Christ and Marian protection in order to avoid the traps and temptations of the devil. This underscores the importance of deepening one's relationship with God. By St. Francis de Sales' inspirations, the virtues of obedience, diligence, chastity, work, and temperance are emphasized to encourage the Salesians' openness to God.

Notably, in specific instructions for superiors, St. Francis de Sales stated: "Total self-sacrifice is necessary, so as to draw himself and his charges to God."[256] This reflects a crucial point in favor of the Salesians' openness to God and their deep relationship with Him. Furthermore, regarding the coffin that appeared in the dream, St. Francis de Sales highlighted the mortality of humans, serving as a reminder to Don Bosco to urge his spiritual sons to continue practicing what he had taught and to recognize that his own earthly mission would not last forever.[257]

The patron saint also stressed the importance of foreign missions seeking and

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[255] BM, vol. 14, 90. Don Bosco said: "I wanted to ask more questions, but muffled thunder rumbled through the air with flashes of lightning. Several men, rather horrid monsters, dashed towards me as if to tear me to pieces. But then a deep darkness enveloped me, shutting everything out. I felt that I must be dead and started to scream frenziedly. I awoke and found I was still alive. It was a quarter to five in the morning." See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 342. The thunderbolt (or lightning) is celestial fire as an active force, terrible and dynamic. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 567. De Vries explained that the symbol of thunder means the voice of the supreme deity in order to express his anger, assent, or accompanying a proclamation. See also *Ibid.*, 355. Jung considered lightning that the soul is often seen as liberated by a flash of lightning, and a sudden, unexpected, and overpowering danger of psychic condition. This explanation suggested by Jung is appropriate to elaborate Don Bosco's situation at the end of his dream.

[256] BM, vol. 14, 89.

[257] *Ibid.*, 90.

fostering native vocations. From a perspective of spiritual education, these reminders aim to cultivate openness to God and nurture a deep relationship with Him for the glory of God and the purpose of evangelization.

5.1.4 The Consequences

After the dream, Don Bosco shared his account with the boys of the oratory in the "Good Night" on May 9, 1879.[258] Along with this narration, he provided several instructions for his spiritual sons and offered advice for the future. At the conclusion of his account, Don Bosco said: "If we can draw some good from this dream, let us do so. In all things let honor and glory be given to God forever and ever."[259]

5.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

The virtues of the Salesians were highlighted in the discussion between St. Francis de Sales and Don Bosco in this dream. These virtues included obedience, chastity, adherence to house rules, self-sacrifice, kindness, good morality, work and temperance, and prayer. Significantly, these virtues have become a checklist for Salesian sanctity, serving as a valuable guide in formation, particularly during the initial stages.[260]

The notion of personal conversion is another significant theme represented in this dream. With the aid of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, one must resist the devil and its temptations daily as a response to Divine Providence. Ultimately, this leads to a happy death and eternal triumph. This theme represents the lifelong journey of conversion, emphasizing the dynamics of guidance and motivation until death.[261]

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[258] *Ibid.*, 88.

[259] *Ibid.*, 90.

[260] Cf. C, 105. The Salesian during initial formation: "For the Salesian the time of initial formation is not so much a period of making time as already one does of work and holiness. It is a time of dialogue between God, whose initiative calls him and leads him forward, and it is his own responsibility for his own formation. In this process of growing responsibility, he is sustained by prayer, spiritual direction, personal reflection, study and brotherly relationships."

[261] Cf. C, 90. The Community in continual Conversion: "The Word of God calls us to continual conversion. Aware of our weakness, we respond by vigilance and sincere repentance, brotherly

The preparation for a happy death is another important element of this dream. Humans are mortal, and we do not know when our lives will end. Under Divine grace, we must seize every opportunity to lead a virtuous life, striving toward a happy death and ultimately receiving the eternal life granted by God. As St. Francis de Sales said in this dream: "Let those who do good keep doing good. Not to go forward is to go backward. The man who stands firm to the end will be saved."[262] This reflects the core of Salesian pedagogy regarding the approach to death.[263]

correction, mutual forgiveness and the calm acceptance of our daily cross…."

[262] BM, vol. 14, 89.

[263] Cf. C, 54. Death of the confrere: "……Death for the Salesian is made bright by the hope of entering into the joy of his Lord, and when it happens that a Salesian dies working for souls, the Congregation has won a great triumph……"

6. The Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881[264]

This dream occurred on the night of September 10, 1881, in San Benigno Canavese.[265] It centered on the future of the Salesian Society and the important virtues of the Salesians. Fr. Stella observed that this dream shared similarities to the dream in Lanzo in 1876.[266] Moreover, we propose that the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879 also shares some parallels with it. These three dreams can be grouped together as a series, as they all pertain to the future of the Salesian Society and vocations, reflecting similar themes.

The dream in San Benigno Canavese was divided into three parts: "light", "shadow" and "hope".[267] Part 1, "light", Don Bosco was walking with the directors of the Salesian houses when a man of majestic appearance appeared before them. He was draped in a rich cloak adorned with ten sparkling diamonds, symbolizing virtues that the Salesians were called to cultivate.[268] Part 2, "shadow", a dense darkness suddenly descended upon everyone present. The group fervently prayed the *Veni Creator*, *De Profundis,* and *Maria Auxilium Christianorum.* Following the prayers, a light illuminated a poster bearing an ominous inscription: "the Pious Salesian Society runs

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[264] BM, vol. 15, 148-152.

[265] DBHS, vol. 5, 366-367. In August, 1879, Don Bosco accepted the invitation to open a school in San Benigno Canavese with the idea of establishing a novitiate.

[266] DBD, 27.

[267] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 59.

[268] BM, vol. 15, 148. "On the night of September 10-11, while I was asleep, I dreamed that I was in a richly adorned hall. I seemed to be strolling up and down its length with the directors of our houses when a man of majestic mien—so majestic that none of us could fix our gaze on him—appeared among us. He was clad in a rich mantle or cape closed at the front of the neck with a scarf from which in a ribbon hung down on his chest. The scarf was inscribed in luminous letters: *Pia Salesianorum Societas anno 1881* (The Pious Salesian Society in 1881); on the ribbon were the words; *qualis esse debet* (what it ought to be). Ten diamonds of extraordinary size and brilliance adorning that august person kept our gaze from being fixed upon him."

Regarding these ten diamonds, three are on the chest of the man of majestic mien: *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*. The fourth diamond, *Work*, affix to his right shoulder, and the fifth diamond, *Temperance*, is on his left shoulder. The other five diamonds are on his back: *Obedience* in the center, *Vow of Poverty* at the upper right, *Reward* in the lower right, *Vow of Chastity* in the upper left, *Fasting* in the lower left.

the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900."[269] The majestic figure reappeared, but this time he looked sad and worn out. The ten diamonds on his cloak had vanished and were replaced by voracious worms.[270] Part 3, "hope", Once again, a thick darkness engulfed everything. However, it was dispelled by the glow of a young man dressed in a white garment adorned with shining diamonds. The young man delivered words of hope to those present, lifting their spirits and rekindling their determination.[271]

6.1 The Analysis of the Dream

6.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

The spiritual retreat for the Salesians in September 1881 at San Benigno Canavese played a significant role in this dream.[272] Don Bosco was deeply concerned

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[269] *Ibid.*, 149-150.

[270] *Ibid.* "……As Fr. Fagnano was writing, the lights went out and we were left in total darkness……a light shone, focusing on a poster which read: *Pia Salesianorum Societas quails esse periclitatur anno salutis 1900* (The Pious Salesian Society as it runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900). A moment later the light grew stronger, and we were able to see and recognize each other.

At the heart of this glowing light, the same august person appeared again, but he looked very sad and on the verge of tears. His cape was faded, motheaten and threadbare. Where each diamond had previously been set, there was now a gaping hole made by moths and other insects.

'Look and understand,' the personage said. Then I saw that the ten diamonds had turned into as many moths and other insects……"

[271] *Ibid.*, 150-151. "……Pitch darkness again swallowed us up and in its midst a most dazzling light arose in the form of a human body. We could not fix our eyes on it, but we could make it out to be a handsome young man, clad in a white garment interwoven with gold and silver threads and entirely bordered by a string of brilliant diamonds. He moved towards us majestic in mien, yet gentle and friendly, and addressed us as follows: 'Servants and instruments of Almighty God, listen and understand. Take heart and be strong. What you have seen and heard is a heavenly warning sent to you and to young confreres. Take it to heart and endeavor to understand it. An attack foreseen does less harm and can be warded off. Let each of the inscriptions be a topic of your talks. Preach unceasingly in season and out of season. However, make sure that you always practice what you preach, so that your deeds may be a light, which may be passed on to your confreres from generation to generation as a solid tradition. Take heed and understand. Be cautious in accepting novices, strong in training them, prudent in admitting them (to vows). Test all of them, but keep only the good; dismiss the light minded and fickle. Take heed and understand. From morning to night ceaselessly meditate on the observance of the constitutions. If you do this, the hand of the Almighty will never fail you. You will be a model to the world and to angels, and your glory will be the glory of God. Those who will live to see the end of this century and the dawn of the next shall say of you: 'By the Lord was this accomplished, and it is wonderful in our eyes.' Then all your confreres and all your sons shall sing: 'Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory.' These last words were chanted, and the youth's voice was joined by a multitude of other voices, so melodiously blended and resonant that we were soon beside ourselves and, to keep from swooning away, chimed in the singing. As the song ended and the light dimmed, I awoke and realized that it was dawn."

[272] *Ibid.*, 148. "On September 10 of this year 1881, the day the Church was dedicated to the glorious name of Mary, the Salesians were assembled at San Benigno Canavese for their spiritual retreat."

about the spiritual well-being of his Salesians. Moreover, the Second General Chapter of the Salesian Society, held in 1880, was another crucial event tied to the themes of the dream.[273] During this General Chapter, key topics—such as obedience, studies, and admission to the novitiate—were discussed.[274] These issues closely align with the content and messages conveyed in this dream.

6.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

In part 3 of this dream, a young man dressed in a white garment adorned with shining diamonds addressed the Salesians, saying: "Servants and instruments of Almighty God, listen and understand. Take heart and be strong. What you have seen and heard is a heavenly warning sent to you and to your confreres……"[275] This statement underscores God's guidance and initiative. The young man urged the Salesians to take these heavenly messages and warnings to heart, encouraging them to strive for understanding and alignment with the Divine will.[276]

The young man exhorted the Salesians to preach and practice what they preached, emphasizing the necessity of living in consistency with the virtues presented in the dream.[277] These instructions highlight the interplay between guidance and motivation, calling the Salesians to serve as models to the world. Their lives were to manifest the glory of God, as proclaimed by the young man in the dream.[278]

The young man further explained that, by living out and preaching these virtues, the Salesians would sing a song glorifying the Divine name: "Not to us, Lord, not to

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[273] DBHS, vol. 7, 73. The Second General Chapter was held on 3-15 September 1880 in Lanzo.

[274] *Ibid.*, 98-102.

[275] BM, vol. 15, 150.

[276] *Ibid*.

[277] *Ibid*. The virtues were presented in the dream: Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, Work, Obedience, Chastity, Poverty, Reward, and Fasting.

[278] *Ibid*., 151.

us, but to Your name be the glory."[279] This chant, first sung by the young man and then echoed by a multitude of other voices, clearly expressed their desire to exalt the Divine glory. These scenarios served as compelling evidence of the Divine call to seek and manifest the glory of God.

6.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

Regarding personal issues, the spiritual retreat appears to have significantly influenced this dream, given the presence of symbols of virtues that might have been recollected during that retreat. Another notable historical element is the decline of Fruttuaria Abbey in San Benigno Canavese. This abbey, built in the 11th century by the Benedictine Order, was gradually abandoned during the 18th century. In 1879, the Salesians were invited to establish a school in the disused abbey.[280] Don Bosco's concern for the future of the Salesian Society in some ways mirrored the decline of the abbey. His worries for his spiritual sons were expressed during the Second General Chapter, which likely influenced this dream. For example, after the 1880 General Chapter, Don Bosco wrote a letter to the directors of Salesian communities, reminding them of the importance of vigilance in practicing the virtue of obedience.[281]

During this time, Don Bosco faced conflict with Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi, a significant issue that was at a critical juncture.[282] Meanwhile, two major projects were underway: First, the Salesian expansion in Italy, France, and Spain was actively progressing;[283] Second, at the request of Pope Leo XIII, Don Bosco undertook on the advancement of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome on April 5, 1880,

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[279] *Ibid*.

[280] DBHS, vol. 5, 366-367.

[281] *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 104-105.

[282] *Ibid.*, 159-160.

[283] *Ibid*., vol. 5, 360-378. Regarding the Salesian expansion in Italy, in France, and in Spain, the Salesian houses were established in Penango, Florence, Faenza, and Mogliano Veneto of Italy in the early 1880s. The first Salesian house was started in Utrera of Spain in February, 1881.

while the construction of St. John the Evangelist's Church continued.[284] However, the conflict with the archbishop and these architectural projects are not directly related to this study and will not be analyzed further.

From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream is categorized as clairvoyance due to its focus on reminders to foster the sanctity of the Salesians. It is also precognitive, as a poster in the dream foresaw a potential future for the Salesian Society: "The Pious Salesian Society runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900."[285]

Regarding the correlation between the dream and reality, the virtues presented in the dream and their interpretation strongly align with biblical teachings. According to Fr. Stella's research, certain messages in the dream were inspired by *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ* by St. Alphonsus Liguori.[286] Furthermore, evidence suggests that the virtues described align with Don Bosco's spirituality, which was influenced by *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales, as well as *The Holy Mass* and *Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary* by St. Alphonsus.

In part 1, "light",[287] Don Bosco mentioned being in "a richly adorned hall,"[288] possibly reminiscent of Fruttuaria Abbey. A "man of majestic mien" appeared, "clad in a rich mantle or cape closed at the front of the neck with a scarf from which a ribbon hung down on his chest."[289] This figure is seemingly connected to the Archangel

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[284] *Ibid*., vol. 7, 99.

[285] BM, vol. 15, 149-150.

[286] DBD, 30-32.

[287] BM, vol. 15, 148.

[288] *Ibid.*, vol. 14, 248-254. Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 281. In view of dreams, De Vries described the symbol of hall as a vagina. Apparently, this understanding is not appropriate to apply in this dream.

[289] BM, vol. 15, 148. Regarding the man of majestic mien, Fr. Stella explained that this could be

Gabriel in the Annunciation, as described in the Gospel reading for the feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[290] Both the angel and the majestic figure served a similar purpose: delivering a divine message. According to Cirlot, the symbol of man signifies conscious being,[291] though this interpretation differs from the meaning in this dream.

The august figure in the dream wore a cloak adorned with ten diamonds.[292] According to Cirlot, diamonds symbolize treasure and riches, representing moral and intellectual knowledge.[293] These virtues align with the spiritual teachings of St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus. In this scene, several biblical themes converge to

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evoked by the solemn figure of Cardinal Victor Amadeus Delle Lanze (1712-1784), the most famous prelate of the eminent Fruttuaria's Abbey in San Benigno Canavese. His marble tomb was in the church, and an oil painting in the sacristy depicted his lineaments and his cardinal's attire. Besides this explanation, another possible reason for the liturgical issue has been presented in the text. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 373. De Vries elaborated that the symbol of mantle means enveloping a deity, hiding the deity's radiance, or protecting man against his or her brilliance. See also Ibid., 491. De Vries explained that the symbol of scarf means love and romance, and this understanding is not appropriate to apply in this dream. See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 273. Cirlot declared that ribbons knotted together to form a circle are symbols of immortality by virtue of their circular shape. They also carry a heroic significance, like all crowns or garlands, for the very act of crowning an undertaking fulfilled is so called because of the symbolic relationship between the crown and the concept of absolute fulfillment.

[290] *Liber Usualis: Missae Et Officii*, 1628. According to Fr. Ceria's recording, in the beginning of the narration: "On September 10 of this year 1881, the day the Church was dedicated to the glorious name of Mary, the Salesians were assembled at San Benigno Canavese for their spiritual retreat." Obviously, the issue of Liturgy could be related to the dream. In the feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Gospel of St. Luke 1:26-28 "the Birth of Jesus Foretold" was used for the Gospel Reading, and the messenger's mission of the Archangel Gabriel might impact the dream's content. Therefore, it was possible that the liturgy's issue and Don Bosco's dream had a certain relationship.

[291] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 196-199. In view of psychology, level-symbolism is often brought to bear upon the members of the body, so that the right side corresponds to the conscious level and the left to the unconscious. The shapes of the body, depending upon whether they are positive or negative–whether they are protuberances or cavities–should be seen not only as sex-symbols but also in the light of the symbolism of levels.

[292] BM, vol. 15, 148. "Ten diamonds of extraordinary size and brilliance adorning that august person kept our gaze from being fixed upon him. Three of the diamonds he wore on his chest: on one was written the word *Faith*. On another was written *Hope*, and the third over his heart bore the word *Charity*. The fourth diamond, affixed to his right shoulder, was inscribed *Work*; the fifth, on his left shoulder, read *Temperance*. The remaining five diamonds adorning the back of his cloak were set into a quadrangle; the largest and most brilliant sparked in the very center, and on it was written *Obedience*. The diamond to its upper right read *Vow of Poverty*, and that below it, *Reward*. On the diamond to the upper left was written *Vow of Chastity*; its sparkle had a brilliance all its own and drew our gaze as a magnet attracts iron. Beneath it was a diamond inscribed *Fasting*. These four diamonds focused their dazzling rays upon the one in the center; their rays, resembling tongues of fire, flickered upward, forming various maxims."

[293] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 81.

highlight the importance of moral virtues. Standing before the majestic figure were virtues such as: (1) *Faith*, "take up the shield of faith that you may fight against the devil's wiles……Faith without works is dead. Not the hearers but the doers of the law will possess the kingdom of God."[294] These three phrases may be drawn from three Apostles' Letters: first, the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 6:11;[295] second, the Letter of St. James 2:17;[296] and third, the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 2:13.[297] (2) *Hope*, "hope is in the Lord, not in men. Let your hearts rest where true joys are found,"[298] a sentiment that closely aligns with the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 15:13.[299] (3) *Charity*, "bear one another's burdens if you want to fulfill My Law. Love and you shall be loved. Love the souls of your charges. Recite the Divine Office devoutly, celebrate Mass attentively, visit the Holy of Holies with great love."[300] The first, second, and third sentences may have been inspired by the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians 6:2,[301] the First Letter of St. John 4:19,[302] and the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 12:15, respectively.[303] Additionally, the three spiritual practices outlined in the final sentence may have been influenced by the teachings of St. Alphonsus in *The Holy Mass*,[304] and *Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and the*

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[294] BM, vol. 15, 148.

[295] "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

[296] "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jm 2:17).

[297] "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rm 2:13).

[298] BM, vol. 15, 148.

[299] "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Rm 15:13)

[300] BM, vol. 15, 148.

[301] "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

[302] "We love, because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

[303] "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?" (2 Cor 12:15)

[304] Alphonsus Liguori, *The Holy Mass*, ed. Engene Grimm (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1889), 425

Blessed Virgin Mary.[305] Such teachings were part of the general knowledge imparted to clergy and seminarians at that time. Undoubtedly, Don Bosco studied the moral theology of St. Alphonsus during his three-year formation at the Pastoral Institute. (4) *Work*, "the remedy for concupiscence, a powerful weapon against the devil's wiles,"[306] reflects St. Alphonsus' teachings: "Manual work contributes greatly to relieve the tediousness of solitude, and also to overcome temptations, which are very frequent in solitude."[307] (5) *Temperance*, "remove the fuel and the fire will die out. Make a pact with your eyes, with cravings, your sleeping, lest these enemies plunder your soul. Self-gratification and chastity cannot co-exist."[308] In the *Treatise on the Love of God*, St. Francis de Sales describes temperance as "a love which gives itself entirely unto God," and emphasizes "repressing the rebellious movements of sensuality."[309]

On the back of the august figure were: (6) *Obedience*, "the foundation of the

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& 458. Regarding "reciting the Divine Office devoutly", St. Alphonsus said: "When then, O priest of God, you take in hand your breviary, imagine that an angel is on one side noting down your merits in the book of life, if you say the Office with devotion; and on the other side that the devil is writing down your faults in the book of death, if you say it willful distractions." Regarding "celebrating Mass attentively", St. Alphonsus said: "A priest celebrating Mass ought to behave with all the reverence due to so great a sacrifice. To induce him to do this is the intent, or at least the principal point, of this treatise. Let us then see what is meant by reverence. It means, first, a proper attention to the words of the Mass; and secondly, an exact observance of the ceremonies prescribed by the rubrics."

[305] Id., *Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary*, ed. R. A. Coffin (London: Burns & Lambert, 1855), 5 & 8. Regarding "visiting the Holy of Holies with great love", St. Alphonsus said: "Let all those devout souls who often go and spend their time with the Most Blessed Sacrament speak; let them tell us the gifts, the inspirations which they have received, the flames of love which are there enkindled in their souls, the paradise which they enjoy in the presence of this hidden God……In the visits you will read other examples of the tender affection with which souls inflamed with the love of God loved to dwell in the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament. But you will find that all the Saints were enamored of this most sweet devotion; since, indeed, it is impossible to find on earth a more precious gem, or a treasure more worthy of all our love, than Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament."

[306] BM, vol. 15, 148.

[307] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, ed. Eugene Grimm (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1888), 170. In addition to the explanation described in the text, St. Alphonsus also said: "From the conduct of the angel the saint learned that he was to live in solitude, and at the same time defend himself against temptations by passing from prayer to work and from work to prayer."

[308] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[309] Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. Henry Benedict Mackey (Rockford: Tan Books, 1997), 348, 361.

whole edifice and a precis of sanctity."[310] St. Alphonsus similarly taught that "obedience should, of all virtues, be the most dear to a religious," and that "obedience is a virtue that infuses the other virtues into the mind and preserves them in the soul."[311] Additionally, in *Introduction to the Devout Life*, St. Francis de Sales explained the idea of obedience as "consecrating our heart."[312] (7) *Poverty*, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Riches are thorns. Poverty is not made of words but is in the hearts and deeds. Poverty will open the gates of heaven and enter it."[313] This teaching reflects St. Francis de Sales' consecration of worldly goods to the love and service of God.[314] Moreover, St. Alphonsus taught that the practice of poverty stems from the love of Jesus, who for our sake became poorer than we are.[315] Besides these teachings, the concept of poverty is undeniably inspired by the Beatitudes in the Gospel of St. Matthew.[316] (8) *Chastity*, "all virtues come with it. Those with a clean heart will see God's mysteries and God Himself."[317] This virtue also draws from the Beatitudes.[318] St. Alphonsus considered chastity an angelic and celestial virtue,[319] while St. Francis de Sales described chastity as "the lily of the virtues, and makes men almost equal to the Angels. Nothing is beautiful but by purity, and the purity of men is chastity."[320] (9)

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[310] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[311] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 52.

[312] De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 141.

[313] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[314] De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 141. "……and poverty our possessions to the love and service of God……"

[315] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 31. "Whenever you experience the inconveniences of poverty, say: I have not left the world and retired into the cloister for the enjoyment of ease and riches, but to practice poverty for the love of my Jesus, who for my sake became poorer than I am."

[316] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3).

[317] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[318] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).

[319] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 4. St. Alphonsus said: "Chastity is justly styled an angelic and celestial virtue."

[320] De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 143.

Reward, "if the lavish rewards are delightful, do not be deterred by the many hardships. He who suffers with Me will rejoice with Me. For My friends, suffering is momentary, but heavenly happiness is everlasting."[321] St. Alphonsus similarly stated: "O happy traffic! in which we renounce the goods of the earth, which are but mire, and receive in exchange the graces of God and eternal rewards; which are more precious than the purest gold."[322] (10) *Fasting*, "the most powerful weapon against the devil's snares. The safeguard of all virtues. By it devils of every sort are cast out."[323] This teaching comes from the Gospel of St. Mark, which says that certain devils cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.[324] St. Alphonsus also stated: "To preserve one's soul and body free from stain, one must also chastise his or her flesh, by fasting, abstinence, by disciplines and other penitential works."[325]

These interconnected virtues formed a model of Salesian spirituality inspired by the teachings of St. Francis de Sales[326] and St. Alphonsus.[327] Don Bosco was deeply influenced by their works, having studied their teachings in moral theology at the Pastoral Institute.

In part 2, "shadow", the dream took a dark turn,[328] portraying a foreboding vision

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[321] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[322] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 88.

[323] BM, vol. 15, 149.

[324] "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." (Mk 9:29)

[325] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 9.

[326] De Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, 240. "The like it is in all the habits of prudence, temperance, faith, hope and charity; they are ever within the just man's heart, though they are not always in action."

[327] Liguori, *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*, 32. "A religious ought to struggle for the superiority in humility, patience, meekness, charity, love of contempt, poverty, purity, and obedience."

[328] See Ronnberg, ed., *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*, 100. Ronnberg considered that darkness attracts human projections of moral or mental deficiency, often translated in terms of sin or evil. Also, darkness is a stage in which the ego is confronted not only with the weight of its earthliness and unlived possibilities, but also with its capacity for evil. These explanations are appropriate to be applied in this dream.

of the potential decline of the Salesian Society.[329] The same august person, now with a faded, moth-eaten, and threadbare cape, appeared; he looked deeply saddened and on the verge of tears. Meanwhile, the image of the ten diamonds had changed to gaping holes made by moths and other insects,[330] conveying a new message. In the dream, the Salesians were overcome with fear and fell into a faint.[331]

If we focus on this scene of darkness and fear, we might attempt to interpret it through the lens of the Gospel of St. Matthew—specifically the scenes of the Kingdom being thrown into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In this Gospel, six parables are presented, five of which describe people being cast into the outer darkness or the furnace of fire: (1) lack of Faith in Mt 8:10-12,[332] (2) sons of the evil one, and the evil in Mt 13:40-42 & 47-50

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[329] BM, vol. 15, 149-150. "The Pious Salesian Society runs the risk of being in the year of salvation 1900."

[330] *Ibid*. "'Look and understand,' the personage said. Then I saw that the ten diamonds had turned into many moths ravenously eating through the cape.
In the place of *Faith* I now saw 'Sleep and sloth.'
In the place of *Hope*, 'Buffoonery and scurrility.'
In the place of *Charity*, 'Negligence in the performance of spiritual duties. They love and seek what gratifies them, not what pertains to Christ.'
In the place of *Temperance*, 'Gluttony.' 'Their God is their belly.'
In the place of *Work*, 'Sleep, theft and idleness.'
In the place of *Obedience* there was only a gaping hole and no inscription.
In the place of *Chastity*, 'Concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life.'
Poverty had been replaced by 'Comfort, clothes, drink and money.'
In the place of *Reward*, 'The things of earth are what we seek.'
Where *Fasting* had been, there was only a hole, no writing."
See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 149. Cirlot claimed that the symbol of a hole is a very important symbol with two main aspects: on the biological level, it has fertilizing power and is related to fertility rites; on the spiritual plane, it stands for the opening of this world on to the other world. These explanations are different from the meaning of evil signified in this dream in regard to the symbol of holes. See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 393. De Vries described the symbol of moths as destroyers and corruption, which are relevant to the meaning in this dream. See also *Ibid.*, 323. De Vries considered the symbol of insects as short life and reducing primeval monster with decreased sensibility.

[331] BM, 150. "We were now all filled with fear. Fr. Lasagna fell into a faint. Fr. Cagliero turned as white as a sheet and, grasping a chair for support, cried out, 'Can it be that things have already come to such a state?' Fr. Lazzero and Fr. Guidazio, frightened out of their wits, reached out to hold each other up. Fr. Francesia, Count Cays, Fr. Barberis and Fr. Leveratto fell to their knees, rosary in hand."

[332] Regarding Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant, "When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, 'Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of

respectively,[333] (3) lack of the righteous deeds of the saints in Mt 22:11-14,[334] (4) the hypocrites who were gluttons and drunkards in Mt 24:48-51,[335] and (5) wicked, slothful and worthless servant in Mt 25:26-30.[336] Although these scenarios do not align perfectly with the imagery of the ten diamonds in part 2 of the dream, they share meaningful parallels. The people thrown into the outer darkness and the august person with the faded cape in the dream might symbolize individuals lacking virtues. This serves as a powerful reminder to the Salesians to maintain their high regard for spirituality and resist temptations.

In part 3, "hope", a young man dressed in a white garment, adorned with shining diamonds, reappeared and announced a message of hope.[337] This young man

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heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth'" (Mt 8:10-12).

[333] Regarding Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weed, "Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mt 13:40-42).

Regarding the Parable of fishing, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mt 13:47-50).

[334] Regarding the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22:11-14).

In the view of the Book of Revelation 19:8, "it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." Then the man without wedding garment in the Parable may be explained as "lack of the righteous deeds of the saints".

[335] Regarding the Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave, "But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mt 24:48-51).

[336] Regarding the Parable of the Talents, "But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! ……and cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth'" (Mt 25:26 & 30).

[337] BM, vol. 15, 150-151. "We could not fix our eyes on it, but we could make it out to be a handsome young man, clad in a white garment interwoven with gold and silver threads and entirely bordered by a string of brilliant diamonds." See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 253. De Vries described the symbol of garment as riches, knowledge, and a reflection of the inner man. It seems that these explanations are appropriate to be used for the interpretation of the symbol of

encouraged the Salesians to follow his advice, which would lead them to sing: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory."[338] It is possible that this message of hope was inspired by Psalm 115, which praises the greatness of God, His steadfast love, and His faithfulness.[339] The closing verse of this psalm states: "But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord!" (Ps 115:18) This reminds us that praising God eternally is the primary purpose of this message of hope in the dream. Indeed, this purpose aligns with the aim of the lives of Christians and religious individuals alike.

Regarding spiritual matters, the dream imparted direct requests from the Divine to guide the Salesians. These included: (1) Encouraging the Salesians to employ the virtues represented by the diamonds as key topics for sermons during retreats and daily talks—morning, noon, and night—to foster the sanctity of the Salesians.[340] (2) Instructing the Salesians to preach these topics unceasingly, in season and out of season, while practicing what they preach.[341] (3) Advising caution during initial formation, ensuring that only those genuinely committed would be admitted to vows,

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garment in this dream. See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 341. Cirlot explained that thread is one of the most ancient symbols, like hair. It denotes the essential connection between any of the different planes–the spiritual, the biological, social, etc. See also *Ibid.*, 316. Cirlot elaborated that all types of string, cord or rope are forms of binding, and this forms the basis of their symbolic meaning. It is what lies behind the sacred cord worn by all high-caste Hindus. In view of Freudian, the symbol of string is interpreted as a phallic symbol, which is not appropriate to apply in this dream.

[338] BM, vol. 15, 151. "Then all your confreres and all your sons shall sing: 'Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory.' These last words were chanted, and the youth's voice was joined by a multitude of other voices, so melodiously blended and resonant that we were soon beside ourselves and, to keep from swooning away, chimed in the singing." The symbol of voice also appeared in the Message of Leo XIII in 1878, and the symbol of singing appeared in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876 as well.

[339] "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to thy name give glory, for the sake of thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness!" (Ps 115:1)

[340] BM, vol. 15, 149. "A wide, rose colored ribbon formed the edge of the lower hem of the cloak and on it was written: '*Topic for Sermons, Morning, Noon and Night*: Glean even bits of virtues and you will build a great edifice of sanctity for yourselves. Woe to you who despise small things; you shall fall little by little.'"

[341] *Ibid.*, 150-151.

while dismissing the light-minded and fickle.[342] These Divine reminders served to keep the Salesians open to God and foster a deep relationship with Him. Don Bosco, reflecting on this dream in his *Memorandum*, sought to inspire his spiritual sons to heed these Divine instructions. He wrote: "I was able to ascertain with certainty that the Lord is very merciful to me. Our Society is blessed by God, but He asks us, to also do our share."[343] This *Memorandum* demonstrated that Don Bosco placed his faith and his trust in God, rooted in his deep relationship with the Divine.

6.1.4 The Consequences

After the dream, Don Bosco wrote down some notes upon awakening, and the details of the dream were recorded on November 21, 1881, during the feast of Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple.[344] He also highlighted in the *Memorandum* following his narration: "The evils threatened will be warded off if we preach about the vices and virtues pointed out to us. If we practice what we preach, we shall be able to hand on to our confreres a practical tradition of what we have done and shall do."[345] Although Don Bosco expressed concerns about the future of his congregation in the dream and the *Memorandum*, he maintained strong confidence in God and urged the Salesians to uphold high standards of conduct.

In the *Memorandum*, Don Bosco also described the future of the Salesian Society: "I also managed to ascertain that many thorns and difficulties lie immediately ahead of us, but they will be followed by great consolations. Around 1890 there will be a great fear, around 1895 a great triumph. Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us."[346] According to the studies of Fr. Stella, there is no clear understanding of what the great

[342] *Ibid.*, 149. This idea was also presented in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876.

[343] *Ibid*., 151.

[344] *Ibid*.

[345] *Ibid.*

[346] *Ibid*.

fear around 1890 referred to. However, it appears that Don Bosco's prediction of a great triumph in 1895 might have some connection to the first international congress of Salesian Cooperators, held in Bologna that year.[347]

6.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

A model of personal sanctity and youth pastoral ministry was presented in this dream, serving as an important and significant element. In this model, regarding personal sanctity, it is essential to practice virtues that lead to the perfect love of God in religious life.[348] Notably, the checklist related to Salesian sanctity was symbolized by diamonds in this dream, offering a more concrete and detailed representation than the one in the Dream about Future Salesian Vocations of 1879. The teachings of the Bible, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Alphonsus were evidently used to underscore the importance of these virtues, which serve as a solid foundation for sanctification.

Regarding youth pastoral ministry, the messages in the dream inspired the Salesians to both practice and preach the virtues highlighted within. These virtues became central themes for preaching, spiritual talks, and retreats. Such themes likely formed the spiritual content of the youth pastoral ministry, helping to guide and accompany young people as they approached and encountered Jesus Christ. The phrase "preach and practice," as emphasized by the august figure in the dream, served as a pivotal reminder to the Salesians.

Therefore, this is not only a model for youth pastoral ministry but also a framework for Salesian pedagogy.[349] In summary, this model of personal sanctity and

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[347] DBD, 32-34

[348] Cf. C, 25. Profession a source of sanctification: "The action of the Spirit is for the professed member a lasting source of grace and a support for his daily efforts to grow towards the perfect love of God and men……"

[349] Cf. C, 38. The preventive system in our Mission: "Don Bosco has handed on to us his Preventive System as a means for carrying out our educational and pastoral service. 'This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness.' Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelligence,

youth pastoral ministry is instrumental in guiding individuals toward personal and spiritual perfection.

love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being. It brings together educators and youth in a family experience of trust and dialogue. Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith."

7. The Provera Dream in 1883[350]

This dream occurred on the night of 17 January 1883.[351] The exact location was unclear, but it was possibly in the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, as the related porticoes mentioned in the dream align with that location, which was also a frequent gathering place for the oratory.[352]

The dream's theme focused on the future of the Salesian congregation, and it may have been closely related to three other significant dreams of St. John Bosco: (1) the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, (2) the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, and (3) the Dream in the San Benigno Canavese in 1881. These dreams all shared a common focus on the future of the Salesians and, therefore, are likely part of a related series of St. John Bosco's dreams.

In this particular dream, Fr. Francis Provera (1836-1874)[353] played the role of a Divine messenger.[354] During the dialogue between him and Don Bosco, three key

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[350] BM, vol. 16, 3-5.

[351] *Ibid*., 3.

[352] *Ibid*., 4. In these porticoes of the Salesian Mother House, the "Good Night" was usually given by Don Bosco.

[353] Fr. Francis Provera of Mirabello (1836-1874) had long nurtured a calling to the priesthood, yet he was unable to answer it until 1858, when he met Don Bosco and came to the Oratory. He immediately impressed the Saint with his success as an apostle in the festive oratory. Subsequently he became a talented high school teacher. He took part in the first Salesian profession of triennial vows in May 1862. Between 1862 and 1870, Don Bosco made him as the prefect of the Oratory, Mirabello, Lanzo, and Cherasco in turn, for he showed rare ability in managing the economy of the houses. He was ordained in 1864. His health began to fail around 1869, and he asked Don Bosco for a change. In 1870, Don Bosco brought him back to the Oratory to teach philosophy to the seminarians, and again he displayed wonderful teaching gifts: careful preparation, powerful memory, ease and clarity of expression. These abilities also served him well in the pulpit. In 1872, Don Bosco appointed him to the superior chapter. When he died, after a long, painful illness, Don Bosco lamented that "the Society has lost one of its best members."

[354] BM, vol. 16, 3. "On the night of January 17-18, 1883, I dreamt that I was leaving the dining room along with other Salesian priests. As I reached the door, I noticed an unknown priest walking by my side; on closer observation I realized that he was our late confrere, Fr. Provera. He was somewhat taller than he had been in life. Dressed in new clothing, his face rosy and smiling, he glowed brilliantly as he started to walk out ahead of me.

'Fr. Provera!' I called to him. 'Is it really you?'

'Yes, indeed, I am Fr. Provera,' he answered. Then his face became so handsome and radiant that it was only with great effort that I could return his glance……

'Are you saved?'

areas of inquiry emerged:[355] (1) questions about Don Bosco himself,[356] (2) questions concerning the Salesians,[357] (3) questions about young people achieving eternal salvation.[358]

At one point during their conversation, there was an interruption as Fr. Provera was suddenly enveloped in a brilliant flash of intense light. He then began to speak in a singing voice, praising and glorifying God. Following this, everything disappeared. When Don Bosco asked those around him about what had happened, they reported that they had neither seen nor heard anything. Don Bosco subsequently woke up due to a stomach ache, which occurred at around two o'clock in the morning.[359]

7.1 The Analysis of the Dream

7.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

On January 16, 1883, Don Bosco sent a letter to Fr. Herman Borio in Lanzo,

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'Yes, saved through God's mercy.'
'What do you enjoy in your present life?'
'All that the heart can imagine, all that the mind can grasp, all that the eye can see, all that the tongue can say.'……"

[355] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 73.

[356] BM, vol. 16, 3. "'No, please!' I begged him. 'Don't go away! Speak to me and tell me something about myself.'
'Keep on with your work. Many things await you.'
'Will it be for a long time?'
'Not very long. But work with all your might as though you were to live forever……but always be well prepared.'"

[357] *Ibid.*, 3-4. "'And what about our confreres?'
'Of your confreres demand and insist on fervor.'
'How can we obtain it?'
'The Master of all masters tells us how. Get yourself a well-honed pruning knife and become a good vine-tender. Lop off the branches that are dead or useless. Then the vine will be vigorous and will bear abundant fruit; what's more important, it will continue to be fruitful for a long time.'
'What am I to tell our confreres?'
'To my friends.' He said, in a stronger voice, 'to my confreres say that a great reward awaits them, but that God grants it only to those who will persevere in waging the Lord's battles.'"

[358] *Ibid.*, 4. "'What recommendation do you give me concerning our boys?'
'For your boys I recommend work and vigilance.'
'What else?'
'Vigilance and work, work and vigilance.'
'How are our boys to secure their eternal salvation?'
'Let them feed on the food of the strong and make firm resolutions on confession.'"

[359] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 73.

which may hold significance in relation to the dream. In this letter, he presented a riddle for the boys to solve: "S.S.S.S.S." According to Fr. Borio's interpretation, this stood for "*Sano, Sapiente, Santo Sacerdote Salesiano* (Healthy, Wise, Saintly Salesian Priest)."[360]

This concept had a certain connection to Fr. Francis Provera, who was known for his remarkable teaching talent but suffered from a prolonged and painful illness.[361] Fr. Provera passed away on April 13, 1874,[362] and Don Bosco mourned his loss, stating: "The Society has lost one of its best members."[363] Don Bosco believed that a Salesian priest should possess good health, wisdom, and sanctity. While Fr. Provera was wise and saintly, he lacked good health. It is perhaps for this reason that this esteemed, deceased Salesian priest—whom Don Bosco deeply missed—appeared in his dream.

7.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

In this dream, Fr. Provera served as a Divine messenger, although this role was not explicitly mentioned. He conveyed messages and answered Don Bosco's questions with the ultimate aim of securing the eternal salvation of the Salesians and the boys in the oratory. This appears to be connected to the themes of guidance and motivation, intended to inspire and reinforce Don Bosco's faith and mission.

In one instance, Fr. Provera advised: "Get yourself a well-honed pruning knife and become a good vine-tender. Lop off the branches that are dead or useless. Then

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[360] BM, vol. 16, 2.

[361] *Ibid.*, 364. "In 1870, Don Bosco brought Fr. Provera back to the Oratory to teach philosophy to the seminarians, and he displayed wonderful teaching gifts: careful preparation, powerful memory, ease and clarity of expression. These abilities also served him well in the pulpit. In 1872, Don Bosco appointed him to the superior chapter."

[362] *Ibid.*, vol. 10, 531. Don Bosco missed Fr. Provera much, for example, in the appendix of the 1875 directory, the Saint made a note: "……On the 13th of that month God called Fr. Provera to Himself, and later, within but four months, Fr. Pestarino, the cleric Ghione, and Fr. Joseph Cagliero……It is not surprising that these losses have deeply hurt our Society……We might say that they lived briefly but achieved as much as if they had lived a long life: *Brevi vivens tempore, explevittempora multa.* (Although his life was short, his accomplishments were many—cf. Wis 4:13)……"

[363] *Ibid.*, vol. 16, 364.

the vine will be vigorous and will bear abundant fruit; what's more important, it will continue to be fruitful for a long time."[364] Analogically, this advice can be interpreted as guidance—a reminder to eliminate unworthy candidates or to avoid sins and temptations while fostering and nurturing good candidates to ensure an abundant harvest of virtue and success.

Additionally, Fr. Provera encouraged with the statement: "To my confreres say that a great reward awaits them, but that God grants it only to those who will persevere in waging the Lord's battles."[365] This message was clearly a call to motivation, urging perseverance in fulfilling the Divine will for the salvation of souls. Importantly, Fr. Provera emphasized that these battles belonged to the Lord and that steadfast Salesians who remained faithful to God would receive a great reward as the fruit of their perseverance. This highlights the faith response expected of the faithful.

Toward the end of the dream, Fr. Provera spoke in a singing voice, declaring: "Glory to God the Father, glory to God the Son, glory to God the Holy Spirit: to God who was, who is, and who shall be the judge of the living and the dead."[366] This proclamation was clearly seeking the glorification of God. Following this, Fr. Provera chanted solemnly: "Praise the Lord, all you nations!" To this, a choir of thousands responded: "For steadfast is his kindness towards us." The dream concluded with these solemn chants, closing with the doxology.[367]

This culmination can be regarded as a profound expression of the dynamics between guidance and motivation, all delivered in honor of Jesus Christ.

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[364] *Ibid.*, 4.

[365] *Ibid.*

[366] *Ibid.*

[367] *Ibid.*

7.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

Regarding personal issues, the Salesian expansion remained Don Bosco's main concern. For example, in 1882, the project of St. John the Evangelist's Hospice-School began, while the church itself was nearly completed.[368] Similarly, Don Bosco faced difficulties building the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome.[369] Expansions in France, Spain, and South America also captured his attention that year. Thus, these concerns appear to have been connected to this dream to some degree. The preparation of the Third General Chapter (1883) was another significant factor tied to this dream. Don Bosco sent a letter to the directors and members of each house on June 20, 1883, listing eight topics for discussion before the General Chapter.[370] These topics mirrored the content of this dream, addressing areas such as Salesian formation, fostering vocations, the dismissal of confreres, and more.

From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream was considered clairvoyant because the information was provided by Fr. Provera, who was seen as an external, spiritual source delivering messages regarding the personal and spiritual development of the Salesians.

Considering the correlation between the dream content and reality, Fr. Provera appeared with "a handsome and radiant face"[371] at the beginning of the dream. In the

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[368] DBHS, vol. 5, 369-370.

[369] *Ibid.*, 373-376.

[370] BM, vol. 16, 326. "The material was organized into eight main headings: I: Regulations for the spiritual retreat; II: Regulations for novices and their formation; III: Regulations for parishes directed or to be directed by Salesians; IV: Training of the coadjutor brothers; V: Guidelines for the shops of Salesian houses and ways to foster vocations among the artisans. VI: Norms for the dismissal of confreres. VII: Founding and developing festive oratories attached to Salesian houses. VIII: Revising and modifying the Regulations for the Houses."

[371] *Ibid.*, 3. Don Bosco narrated: "I dreamt that I was leaving the dining room along with other Salesian priests. As I reached the door, I noticed an unknown priest walking by my side; on closer observation I realized that he was our late confrere, Fr. Provera. He was somewhat taller than he had been in life. Dressed in new clothing, his face rosy and smiling, he glowed brilliantly as he started to walk out ahead of me."

Book of Exodus 34:29 and 34, there is mention of the shining face of Moses;[372] therefore, these accounts suggest the concept of a man belonging to God. Furthermore, an illustration of conversion was described by St. Paul: when "a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed" (2 Cor 3:16). Accordingly, this conversion and turning towards God was possibly a general concept in biblical knowledge. According to De Vries, the symbol of a face as an image of the deity.[373] This interpretation can help in understanding the significance of the radiant face in this dream. Additionally, other symbols, such as a room,[374] a door,[375] and clothing[376] were mentioned in this dream.

Don Bosco asked Fr. Provera: "Are you saved?"[377] This question revealed Don Bosco's concern for the salvation of his confreres. Afterward, Don Bosco inquired about the present life of Fr. Provera, to which he replied: "All that the heart can imagine, all that the mind can grasp, all that the eye can see, all that the tongue can say."[378] This expression may allude to Psalm 115:4-8, which refers to idols and those who do not belong to God,[379] as they cannot speak, see, hear, smell, feel, walk, and so on. The dichotomy between good and evil, as presented in the Book of Deuteronomy:

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[372] "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" (Ex 34:29).

"But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the people of Israel what he was commanded" (Ex 34: 34).

[373] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 212.

[374] See Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 274. Cirlot stated that a room is a symbol of individuality, especially of private thoughts. It seems that it is not directly relevant to this dream.

[375] See *Ibid.*, 85. Cirlot considered the symbol or door as a feminine symbol. This contains all the implications of the symbolic hole, since it is the door which gives access to the hole; its significance is therefore the antithesis of the wall. It seems that this explanation is not relevant directly to this dream.

[376] See De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 128. De Vries claimed that the symbol of clothes means hiding, ranking, and personality. These explanations are not completely relevant to this dream.

[377] BM, vol. 16, 3.

[378] *Ibid*.

[379] "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them" (Ps 115:4-8).

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Dt 30:19).[380]

Don Bosco later asked Fr. Provera about himself. This was not the first time Don Bosco posed questions regarding his future. For instance, in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, the coffin symbolized Don Bosco's death.[381] This suggests that Don Bosco, as an elderly person, was naturally concerned about his own passing. In the dialogue, Fr. Provera encouraged Don Bosco to continue his work and to prepare for a happy death.[382]

When Don Bosco asked about the Salesians, Fr. Provera replied, referencing "the image of a good vine-tender",[383] and "granting a great reward to those who would persevere in waging the Lord's battles."[384] These symbols are directly connected to the Gospel of St. John 15:1-2, "Jesus the True Vine,"[385] and to St. Paul's teachings on preserving faith and eternal rewards in the Second Letter of St. Paul to Timothy 4:7-8.[386] The battle imagery, which symbolizes spiritual struggle against the devil, has

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[380] "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess" (Dt 30:15-18).

[381] BM, vol. 14, 90.

[382] *Ibid*., vol. 16, 3.

[383] *Ibid.*, 3-4. "The Master of all masters tells us how. Get yourself a well-honed pruning knife and become a good vine-tender. Lop off the branches that are dead or useless. Then the vine will be vigorous and will bear abundant fruit; what's more important, it will continue to be fruitful for a long time."

[384] *Ibid.* "To my confreres say that a great reward awaits them, but that God grants it only to those who will persevere in waging the Lord's battles."

[385] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (Jn 15:1-2).

[386] "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Tm 4:7-8).

appeared in other dreams as well, such as the Message to Pius IX in 1873 and the dream about the future Salesian vocations in 1879.[387] Cirlot interpreted the vine symbol as an emblem of sacrifice and fecundity. Wine, which derives from grapes, symbolizes both youth and eternal life,[388] making this interpretation relevant to the dream's content.

Regarding Fr. Provera's recommendation to the boys, he emphasized work and vigilance:[389] "Let them feed on the food of the strong and make firm resolutions in confession."[390] This advice underscores the importance of the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession for nurturing spiritual life. Similar themes appeared in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, where the bread of faith and the Divine Word were highlighted. These elements, also presented in the Prophecy in 1870 and the Message to Pius IX in 1873, signify both the Word of God and the Eucharist. According to De Vries, food symbolizes the visible form of Divine life and sacrifice,[391] making this interpretation highly relevant to this dream.

Finally, Fr. Provera sang a hymn glorifying God, saying: "Glory to God the Father, glory to God the Son, glory to God the Holy Spirit: to God who was, who is, and who shall be the judge of the living and the dead."[392] This hymn was reminiscent of the

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[387] See De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 49. De Vries described the symbol of battle as the revival of a withered pear-tree, which means a coming battle. It is not closely related to this dream.

[388] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 360.

[389] Cirlot and De Vries did not present any explanation of the symbols of work and of vigilance. Nevertheless, the symbol of work was highlighted in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879 and in the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881 as well.

[390] BM, vol. 16, 4.

[391] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 237.

[392] BM, vol. 16, 4. "At that instant his entire person became flooded with a most intense brilliance, and I had to avert my gaze. It was like staring into an electric light, only it was by far more building than any light we are used to seeing. He then spoke in a singing voice: 'Glory to God the Father, glory to God the Son, glory to God the Holy Spirit: to God who was, who is, and who shall be the judge of the living and the dead.' I want to continue my conversation, but, in exquisite tones more resonant than can ever be imaged, he began to chant solemnly: 'Praise the Lord, all you nations!' A choir of thousands

faithful prayer: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.” The hymn relates to the Book of Revelation 21:6-8, which speaks of judgment in the new Heaven and Earth.[393] Furthermore, this prayer aligns with St. Francis de Sales, who concluded the *Introduction to the Devout Life* with: “*Vive Jesus*, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.”[394] Fr. Provera continued singing: “Praise the Lord, all you nations! For steadfast is his kindness towards us, and closed with the doxology, Glory to the Father.”[395] This alludes to Psalm 117:1-2: “Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love towards us; and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever. Praise the Lord!” As was customary in the Breviary, this psalm concluded with the doxology, mirroring the prayer sung by Fr. Provera. De Vries suggested that the act of singing symbolizes lightening heavy burdens, fostering good memory, and encouraging a courageous life—all relevant to this dream.[396] Other symbols, such as shadow[397] and porticoes,[398] were also mentioned at the dream's conclusion, adding layers of meaning.

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upon thousands of voices responded from the porticoes and stairway—or rather I should say they joined him with one voice and sang, ‘For steadfast is his kindness towards us,’ and closed with the doxology, ‘Glory to the Father’.”

[393] “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death” (Rv 21:6-8).

[394] De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 268.

[395] BM, vol. 16, 4.

[396] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 517.

[397] It seems that the symbol of shadow is closely related to the symbol of darkness in accordance with the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881 as mentioned above. See also, Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 290. Cirlot admitted that the symbol of shadow means the image of evil. Also, Jung considered shadow as the primitive and instinctive side of the individual.

[398] The symbol of porticoes also appeared in the Another Dream in 1844. Cirlot and De Vries did not present any explanation of the symbol of porticoes.

From a spiritual perspective, this dream strongly emphasized frequent reception of the Sacraments, as advocated by Fr. Provera.[399] These practices are essential for fostering openness to and intimacy with God. Moreover, the dichotomies of (i) good and evil (in Salesian discipline),[400] (ii) rewards and punishment (in Salesian spirituality),[401] and (iii) fervor and indifference (in boys' sacramental life)[402] were central to the dream's message. These themes are reminiscent of the "Exhortation to Choose Life" in the Book of Deuteronomy 30:15-19, underscoring the spiritual awareness expected of the Salesians and the boys in the oratory. In essence, Fr. Provera's message served as a profound call for Don Bosco's spiritual sons to embrace God wholeheartedly and to live virtuously, as the Book of Deuteronomy states: "loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days" (Dt 30:20).

7.1.4 The Consequences

Don Bosco wrote a note about this dream to share its message with the confreres and boys.[403] The dream also had a noticeable impact on the Third General Chapter of the Salesian Society, which was held from September 2-7, 1883. For example, issues such as the mortality among the Salesians[404] and the dismissal of candidates[405] were

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[399] BM, vol. 16, 3.

[400] *Ibid*., 4. Fr. Provera said in this dream: "The Master of all masters tells us how. Get yourself a well-honed pruning knife and become a good vine-tender. Lop off the branches that are dead or useless. Then the vine will be vigorous-and will bear abundant fruit; what's more important, it will continue to be fruitful for a long time."

[401] *Ibid*. Fr. Provera said in this dream: "To my confreres say that a great reward awaits them, but that God grants it only to those who will persevere in waging the Lord's battles."

[402] *Ibid*. Fr. Provera said in this dream: "Let them feed on the food of the strong and make firm resolutions in confession."

[403] *Ibid*. "In a dream which he had in mid-January Don Bosco was given some precious counsels for the good running of the Congregation by Father (Francis) Provera: a clean sweep of (ill-qualified) confreres, work and vigilance over the boys by superiors, frequent reception of the sacraments. We relate the account as found in Don Bosco's own handwriting."

[404] DBHS, vol. 7, 113. "The Congregation needs to be purified." (i) No women should lodge in a Salesian House. (ii) Physical separation should be established from the Sister's workplace (laundry,

highlighted in the dream.

7.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

In this dream, there was a strong emphasis on the Four Last Things (*De Novissimis*): death, judgment, hell, and heaven, which were significant elements. First, death,[406] the death of Don Bosco was indirectly referred to by Fr. Provera.[407] Second, judgment,[408] this was evident in the statement: "……to God who was, who is, and who shall be the judge of the living and the dead."[409] Third, hell,[410] The imagery of a good vine-tender lopping off dead or useless branches symbolized rejection and punishment. Fourth, heaven,[411] eternal life could be attained by frequently receiving the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession.

Undoubtedly, practicing virtues and frequently receiving Sacraments are recurring themes in Don Bosco's dreams. In short, considering the dynamic interplay between guidance and motivation, the Four Last Things are fundamental to Salesian spirituality and pedagogy. They serve as a reminder to both the youth and the Salesians to animate their faith response, emphasizing the importance of being

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kitchen).

[405] *Ibid.* When the members of the Third General Chapter were discussing "workshops and artisans", the question about "dismissal of candidates" was raised. Don Bosco replied with a "parable" (there are various stages in the threshing of wheat, it is a long and complex process).

[406] CCC, 1021: "Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ……"

[407] The issue of Don Bosco's death emerged in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879 as well.

[408] *Ibid*., 1022: "Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven—through a purification or immediately, —or immediate and everlasting damnation."

[409] BM, vol. 16, 4.

[410] CCC, 1035: "The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire.' The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs."

[411] *Ibid*., 1023: "Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they 'see him as he is,' face to face"

well-prepared for a happy death and for praising the Lord forever, as highlighted in this dream.[412]

[412] BM, vol.17, 85-86. Don Bosco's letter from Rome on 10 May 1884: "My most beloved children in Jesus Christ: I am always thinking of you, whether I am near you or far away. I have only one wish and that is to see you happy in this world and eternity……"

8. The Dream about the South America Missions in 1883[413]

Don Bosco experienced this dream on the night before the feast of St. Rose of Lima, on August 30, 1883.[414] According to Fr. Lenti's study, this dream belongs to a series of five missionary dreams.[415] In this particular dream, Don Bosco found himself on a train journey to visit the Salesian missions in South America. The journey, as described in the dream, was divided into three parts:[416] (1) after a brief introduction, Don Bosco suddenly found himself in a large hall where several people were discussing various topics. There, he was recognized by Louis, the son of Count Fiorito Colle of Toulon; (2) while in the hall, Louis showed Don Bosco the Salesian missionary efforts in South America and explained the apostolic works being undertaken there; (3) still accompanied by Louis, Don Bosco boarded a train for a journey across South America. At the end of the journey, he arrived in Patagonia, where the Salesians were engaged in various works. However, Don Bosco did not recognize anyone present, nor did anyone recognize him.

8.1 The Analysis of the Dream

8.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

According to Fr. Ceria, Europeans during that period had limited knowledge about Patagonia's geography.[417] Although it is possible Don Bosco himself had researched relevant resources and studied reports from his fellow missionaries, it is

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413 BM, vol. 16, 304-312.

414 *Ibid.*, 304.

415 Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 3, no. 2 (1992): 23–92, 24-25. The series of five missionary dreams included: (1) the Dream of the (Patagonian) Missions (1871/1872); (2) the Dream of the Train Journal on the (South American) Missions (August 30, 1883, the theoretical sampling of this session); (3) the Dream of the Fantastic Highways and the Hall of Glory on the (South American) missions (January 31, 1885); (4) the Dream of the Angels of the Missions (narrated on July 2, 1885); (5) the Barcelona Dream, or Dream of the Mission Line Santiago-Africa-Peking (April 9, 1886).

416 Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 79.

417 BM, vol.15, 509.

equally plausible that his general understanding of the situation in South America influenced this dream to some extent.

An important feature in this dream is tied to the resignation of the Vincentians from Patagonia on August 15, 1879. Following their departure, Archbishop Federico León Aneiros of Buenos Aires entrusted the missions to the Salesian.[418]

Another key figure associated with this dream is Fr. James Costamagna (1846–1921). As the provincial of South America in 1880,[419] he frequently reported on the circumstances of the Salesian missions to Don Bosco. Don Bosco's encouragement, instructions, and concerns were often conveyed to Fr. Costamagna through letters. Notably, Fr. Costamagna returned to Turin on August 7, 1883, to participate in the Third General Chapter.[420] This return presented Don Bosco with an opportunity for open discussions with his provincial about these missions, which likely inspired some elements of the dream.[421] It is also plausible that Fr. John Cagliero (1838–1926) participated in this discussion, as he was the leader of the first group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina.[422]

Another significant event tied to the dream was Don Bosco's submission of a definitive proposal for the establishment of three vicariates in Patagonia. This proposal was sent to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on July 29,

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[418] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 58.

[419] BM, vol.16, 358-359. Fr. James Costamagna made his first profession in 1867, and less than a year was ordained a priest. In 1877, he led the third missionary expedition to Argentina. In 1880, he was named the director of San Carlos School in Buenos Aires and the provincial of South America. In 1895, he was appointed the apostolic vicar of Mendez and Gualaquiza, Ecuador, and consecrated bishop in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. He died in 1918.

[420] *Ibid.*, 300.

[421] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 61.

[422] BM, vol.16, 357-358. Fr. John Cagliero was one of Don Bosco's early followers, and ordained in Turin in 1862. In 1875, he headed the first group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina. Afterwards, Don Bosco recalled him to Turin in 1877 to become the spiritual director of the Congregation. In 1884, Pope Leo XIII nominated him as the apostolic vicar of northern and central Patagonia, Fr. Cagliero was consecrated in the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. In 1915, Pope Benedict XV named him as a Cardinal, and he died in Rome in 1926.

1883.[423] While the proposal was approved with some modifications, only two ecclesiastical circumscriptions were ultimately established: one in northern and central Patagonia, with Fr. Cagliero serving as the provicar apostolic, and another in southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, with Fr. Joseph Fagnano as the prefect apostolic.[424]

In summary, significant individuals—including Fr. Costamagna, Fr. Cagliero, and Archbishop Aneiros—as well as critical events, including the resignation of the Vincentians and the proposal for vicariates in Patagonia, were directly connected to and likely influenced Don Bosco's dream.

8.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

In Don Bosco's narration, he questioned himself twice about his experience on the night of August 30, 1883, wondering whether it was a dream or reality.[425] He admitted at least once that his dream experience was an extraordinary insight.[426] Louis Colle, the young man who appeared in this dream, acted as a Divine messenger, delivering God's messages to Don Bosco. Louis stated: "I would like in God's name to give you a bit of work."[427] This suggests that the dream was connected to Divine

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[423] *Ibid.*, 295-297.

[424] *Ibid.*, 297. Fr. Joseph Fagnano (1844-1916) Prefect Apostolic came from Rocchetta Tanaro in the province of Asti. At twelve he enrolled in the Asti diocesan seminary. When the seminary closed in 1859, the seminarians were encouraged to transfer to the Oratory in Turin, but Joseph returned home. After serving as an orderly in the army hospital at Asti, he decided to resume his priestly studies under Don Bosco's care. Joseph made his first vows in 1864 and was ordained in 1868. In November 1875, since one of the ten confreres who were assigned to the first Salesian missionary expedition was unable to go, Don Bosco asked Fr. Fagnano to replace him, and he gladly did so. From Buenos Aires he went to San Nicolas de los Arroyos and converted an old home into a boarding school. The following March it was ready for occupancy by 144 boarders and just as many day students. In 1879, he was made pastor at Patagonia, in northern Patagonia, where he built a church and two schools (one for boys, one for girls). Fr. Fagnano was appointed as the prefect apostolic of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in 1887.

[425] *Ibid.*, 304, 308 & 311. Don Bosco said at the beginning of this dream: "While I was deliberating whether this was a dream or reality, I seemed to enter a recreation hall where I found people standing about and discussing various topics." He continued to question himself in the later part of this dream: "But is this a dream or reality?"

[426] *Ibid.*, 308. Don Bosco admitted: "This is what happened to me because of the extraordinary insight that was given to me."

[427] *Ibid.*, 305. This role of Divine messenger appeared in the First Dream (nine years old) in 1824 or

guidance and was initiated by God's will.

During the train journey in the dream, Don Bosco remarked: "My greatest surprise was to see how the Andes in several places reverted upon themselves and formed valleys of whose existence, even present-day geographers do not have any idea how this came out."[428] This underscores that the dream was a form of private revelation from God, aligning with His will and purpose for the evangelization and development of the Salesian Missions.

Later in the dream, after stopping at several train stations, Don Bosco expressed gratitude to God for witnessing the remarkable progress of the Catholic Church, the Salesian Society, and civilization in South America.[429] He stated: "I thanked Divine Providence for graciously using me as an instrument of His divine glory and for the salvation of so many souls."[430] This reflects a faith-filled response and motivation. Don Bosco demonstrated humility in accepting God's will, recognizing himself as an instrument of Divine Providence, and continually striving to glorify God in his mission.

8.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

In 1883, Don Bosco was occupied with preparations for the Third General Chapter, which took place in Valsalice from September 2–7.[431] Although the South American Missions were not officially on the agenda for discussion during the Chapter, Don Bosco shared his dream about these missions with his spiritual sons on

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1825, the Another Dream in 1844, the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881, and the Provera Dream in 1883 as well.

[428] *Ibid.*, 309.

[429] *Ibid.*, 311.

[430] *Ibid.*

[431] DBHS, vol. 7, 110.

September 4 during a morning session.[432] Additionally, between 1876 and 1883, Don Bosco engaged in discussions and negotiations with the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith regarding plans to establish three Vicariates in Patagonia to foster the growth of Salesian Missions in South America.[433] His persistent focus on this missionary project provided essential context for the dream.

At the same time, Don Bosco was occupied with a range of other projects, including the construction of St. John the Evangelist's Church and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. His efforts to establish Salesian works in Italy, France, Spain, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil placed enormous demands on his time, energy, and vitality.[434]

The death of Archbishop Gastaldi on Easter Sunday, March 25, 1883, indirectly facilitated the expansion of the Salesian Missions in South America.[435] Although Gastaldi and Don Bosco had reconciled in 1882,[436] the missionary plan for Patagonia had been kept discreet to avoid further conflict that might have jeopardized the Salesian congregation. Following the archbishop's passing, Don Bosco likely regarded it as an opportunity to expedite his missionary initiatives in Patagonia, which were closely aligned with the themes of this dream.

Louis Anthony Colle, the son of Count Fiorito Colle, appeared in Don Bosco's dream. Louis had passed away on April 3, 1881, at the age of 17.[437] Don Bosco may have experienced sorrow over the young man's death, as apparitions of Louis reportedly occurred multiple times, including one on April 28, 1883—just months

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[432] BM, vol.16, 303.

[433] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 60.

[434] DBHS, vol. 7, 109-110.

[435] BM, vol.16, 56.

[436] DBHS, vol. 7, 109.

[437] BM, vol. 15, 57.

before this dream.[438] In the dream, Louis symbolized an interpreter, revealing aspects of the Salesian Missions in South America to Don Bosco. Louis's father, Count Fiorito Colle, was a significant benefactor to Don Bosco, which might explain Don Bosco's continual remembrance of the Colle family in his prayers.

From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream can be considered a case of telepathy, as it involved the awareness of Salesians in Patagonia who recognized Don Bosco through reputation and photographs despite never having seen him in person.[439] This reflects an exchange of information about a shared consciousness. The dream also demonstrated elements of precognition, as Louis guided Don Bosco on a train journey, revealing South America's geography and its natural resources,[440] such as the Andes Mountains,[441] railroads,[442] coal, petroleum, and lead deposits.[443] The dream provided insights and predictions that aligned with Divine purpose and visionary missionary work.

Regarding the correlation between the dream's content and reality, several

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[438] *Ibid.*, vol.16, 179.

[439] *Ibid.*, 310.

[440] *Ibid.*, 312-315. Fr. Lemoyne summarized Don Bosco's words: "When people come to know the wealth which makes Patagonia precious, this land will have an extraordinary commercial development. In the bowels of the mountain lie hidden precious minerals. In the Andes between the 10th and 20th parallels are to be found deposits of lead, gold, and other minerals more precious than gold." Also, Fr Ceria commented: "Don Bosco gave us a mass of positive data which he could not have learned from either travelers or explorers, since no explorations of any kind had been made in those southernmost latitudes either for tourism or for scientific study."

[441] *Ibid.*, 313-314. Regarding the description of the Andes in this dream, Fr Ceria commented: "In Don Bosco's description, which shows a vertical structure of the Andes and its different modifications, we find an impressive precision. Not even the most authoritative geographer could at that time have come out with such a definitive and precise affirmation as did Don Bosco. There is no doubt that a vision so clear and exact of those places is due to power outstripping human limitations."

[442] *Ibid.*, 314. Regarding fantasy railroads mentioned in this dream, Fr Ceria commented: "Don Bosco described fantasy railroads where only deserts and wastelands existed. Today the rail networks of the republics of Central and South America have undergone a remarkable development and in many places criss-cross the Andes."

[443] *Ibid.*, 314-315. Fr Ceria described: "Don Bosco asserts that extraordinarily rich deposits of coal, petroleum, lead, and even precious metals lie hidden in the bowels of those mountains, placed there for the good of humanity by the all-powerful hand of the Creator." Fr. Ceria highlighted the discovery of oil at Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut province, on 13 December 1907, as the Department of the Interior was drilling in search of fresh water.

symbols and dialogues were recorded. In Part 1, Don Bosco mentioned that this dream occurred on the night before the feast of St. Rose of Lima, the patron saint of Peru and South America,[444] followed by a brief introduction.[445]

At the beginning of the dream, Don Bosco entered a recreation hall where people were discussing various topics. The hall in the dream appeared to represent a venue similar to Fruttuaria Abbey, where Don Bosco was attending a spiritual retreat with the members of the Third General Chapter.[446] It is likely this dream took place in San Benigno Canavese.[447] The venue of the hall held symbolic importance in this dream, as it was the place where Louis Colle appeared and acted as an interpreter.[448]

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[444] Melissa Petruzzello, "St. Rose of Lima," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed 20 August 2019. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Rose-of-Lima. St. Rose of Lima, original name Isabel Flores de Oliva, who was born in April, 1586, passed away on 24 August 1617, and was canonized on 12 April 1671. The Saint's feast day was on 23 August, formerly 30 August, and she was the patron saint of Peru and of all South America. This Saint was the first person born in the Western Hemisphere to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

[445] BM, vol.16, 304. Don Bosco narrated: "On the night before the feast of St. Rose of Lima [August 30], I had a dream. I was aware that I was sleeping, and at the same time I seemed to be running very, very much, so much that I was exhausted with running, talking, writing, and wearing myself out in carrying out the rest of my other regular responsibilities.

A lengthy conversation centered on the hordes of savages in Australia, the Indies, China, Africa, and more especially America, who in countless numbers are presently entombed in the darkness of death.

"Europe," said one of the speakers with much conviction, "Christian Europe, the great mistress of civilization and Catholicism, seems to have lost all interest in the foreign missions. Few are those who have enough enthusiasm to brave long journeys and unknown lands to save the souls of millions of people redeemed by the Son of God, Jesus Christ."

Another said, "How many idolaters in America alone live miserably outside the Church, far from the knowledge of the Gospel. People keep thinking (and geographers keep deceiving them) that the American Cordillera is like a wall blocking off that huge section of the world. It is not so. That interminable chain of lofty mountains contains many plains a six hundred and more miles in length alone. In them are forests as yet unexplored, plants and animals, and also ores rarely found elsewhere. Coal, oil, lead, copper, iron, silver, and gold lie hidden in those mountains where they were secreted by the all-powerful hand of the Creator for the good of humanity. O Andes, Andes, how steeped in wealth is your eastern flank!

At that moment I felt an urgent desire to ask for an explanation of many things and to find out who those persons gathered there were, and where I was. But I said to myself. Before speaking you must find out what kind of people these are. In all curiosity I gazed about at them. Practically all of these people were total strangers to me. In the meantime, *as though they were seeing me for the first time,* they invited me to step forward and welcomed me kindly."

[446] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 61. See also DBHS, vol. 5, 366-367.

[447] BM, vol.16, 312. Don Bosco was woken up by the sound of the bell of the parish church of San Benigno, thus, it was possible that this dream occurred in San Benigno.

[448] *Ibid.*, 304. "During this time, I was approached by a young man of about sixteen, fascinating for his

Don Bosco had written a biography about Louis in 1882.[449] Fr. Lenti suggested that Louis assumed the role of a new Dominic Savio in the context of the future of Salesian Missions. In the dream, Louis's garment was described as being woven with heavenly richness, and he wore a crown-shaped cap adorned with sparkling precious stones.[450] Similarly, St. Dominic Savio wore a distinctive garment in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876.[451] Furthermore, in the Dream of San Benigno Canavese in 1881, an august man was described as wearing a garment richly adorned with ten diamonds. This man also wore a mantle or cape fastened at the front of the neck with a scarf, from which a ribbon hung down over his chest.[452] In all three dreams, the symbols of the garments share notable similarities.

In Part 2 of the dream, while still in the hall, Louis showed Don Bosco a map of the missionary field in South America, accompanied by a coil of rope.[453] Historical

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superhuman beauty and aglow with a brilliance more intense than that of the sun. His garment was woven with heavenly richness, and on his head, he wore a cap shaped like a crown studded with the most sparkling precious stones. Fixing his kindly gaze upon me, he showed keen interest in me. His smile reflected a love that had its own irresistible attraction. He called me by name, then took my hand and began speaking to me about the Salesian Congregation.

I was thrilled by the sound of his voice. At one point I interrupted him and asked, 'With whom do I have the honor of speaking? Do me the kindness of telling me your name.'

The young man replied, 'Don't be worried. Speak with utter trust. You are with a friend.'

'But what is your name?'

'I would tell you my name if it were necessary, but I don't have to because you should know me.' Saying this he smiled.

I took a better look at that countenance flooded with light. How handsome a face! And then I recognized the son of Count Fiorito Colle of Toulon, a distinguished benefactor of our house and especially of our American missions. This young man had died a short time before."

[449] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 69-70.

[450] BM, vol.16, 305.

[451] *Ibid.*, vol. 12, 434. St. Dominic Savio's garments, in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, were altogether unique. The snow-white tunic which he wore down to his feet was studded with diamonds, and there were threads of gold running through it. About his waist was fastened a broad red sash, so thickly embroidered with precious gems that they almost overlapped each other, and sewn into such a charming design with such brilliance of colors that, just looking at them.

[452] *Ibid.*, vol. 15, 148.

[453] *Ibid.*, vol.16, 305. Don Bosco narrated: "In the middle *of that vast hall* stood a table on which lay a coil of rope; it resembled a tape measure marked with lines and numbers. Later I also came to realize that the hall itself was situated in South America, straddling the equator, and that the numbers marked on the rope corresponded to degrees *of latitude.*" See also De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 553. De Vries affirmed that the symbol of table signifies banquet, conference,

records indicate that Don Bosco oversaw the creation of a detailed map of Patagonia around 1882, according to Fr. Ceria.[454] Don Bosco stayed informed about the Salesian Missions and often reported to the Holy See. For instance, in April 1879, three Salesian missionaries accompanied a military expedition led by the Minister of War to meet indigenous people at Carhué (Alsina) and Choele-Choel, areas considered gateways to Patagonia.[455] It is possible that such information became integrated into the general understanding among the Salesians at that time, thereby contributing to the significance of this dream.[456]

The symbols of mountains and the sea were presented in this dream. Cirlot stated that the symbol of mountains is associated with meditation, spiritual elevation, and the communion of the blessed.[457] Regarding the sea, Cirlot considered it to represent the source of life.[458] While these interpretations suggest a strong sense of spirituality, the mountains and sea mentioned in this dream likely also reflect the actual geography of South America.

In addition to the geographical references, a basket of small green figs, carried by Fr. Angelo Lago, was presented to Don Bosco.[459] The symbol of figs can, to some degree, be connected to "The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree" in the Gospel of St.

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altar, and earth-symbol. See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 275. Cirlot described the rope that it is a general symbol for binding and connection.

[454] BM, vol.15, 509.

[455] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 58.

[456] BM, vol.16, 307. Don Bosco said: "To the west I see very lofty mountains, and to the east there is the sea!"

[457] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 221.

[458] *Ibid.*, 281.

[459] Lenti, "Don Bosco's Missionary Dreams—Images of a Worldwide Salesian Apostolate," 66. Fr. Angelo Lago (1834-1914), a pharmacist from Peveragno (Cuneo, Italy) became a Salesian and was ordained in 1877. He was the private secretary of Fr. Michael Rua, the second Rector Major of the Salesian Society, until his death.

Luke 13:6-9,[460] which highlights the importance of bearing good fruits after proper care. In the dream, Don Bosco was urged to make the figs ripen by reattaching them to the tree.[461] The suggested method involved dipping the figs into a basin of blood and then into another basin of water.[462] The explanation given was: "With sweat and blood the savages will turn back and be re-attached to the plant, thus becoming pleasing to the master of life."[463] This part of the dream appears to emphasize the necessity of martyrdom and laborious effort in achieving ultimate success. It reflects two common themes of missionary work: conversion and the cultivation of a bountiful missionary harvest.

Furthermore, the imagery of reattaching figs to the tree reflects Jesus's words: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5) According to De Vries, figs symbolize fertility and abundance,[464] both of which are relevant to this dream. The image of fruitful figs being nurtured by the missionaries' sweat and blood, aligns with these themes and emphasizes the spiritual labor required for missionary success.

In Part 3, the setting was a train journey, representing a common means of transportation during that era.[465] Don Bosco traveled through South America and into

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[460] "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down'" (Lk 13:6-9).

[461] The symbol of a tree emerged in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876 as well.

[462] BM, vol.16, 307. The symbol of blood emerged in the Prophecy in 1870 as well. See also Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 364-365. Freud claimed that birth is usually expressed through water-imagery. This explanation is relevant to this dream to some degree in order to signify the mature figs.

[463] BM, vol.16, 307.

[464] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 222.

[465] BM, vol.16, 308-311.

Patagonia. De Vries stated that the symbol of a train symbolizes progress, which closely aligns with the theme of this dream.[466] As Don Bosco embarked on the train journey, he was shown numerous Salesian missionary efforts among various tribes of savages.[467] Before the dream concluded, he and young Colle entered a region inhabited by wild animals and bizarre, poisonous snakes with horrifying shapes.[468]

These scenarios bore similarities to Don Bosco's First Dream in 1824 or 1825 and his Another Dream in 1844. However, unlike in the earlier dreams, where wild animals became docile, in this dream, the animals did not transform. Instead, the Salesians were tasked with taming them as part of their missionary work. Thus, this dream, along with the earlier ones mentioned in Don Bosco's autobiography, where wild animals were subdued, became foundational in shaping the Salesians' general understanding of youth education and transformation.

From a spiritual perspective, in the dream, Louis said to Don Bosco: "I would like *in God's name* to give you a bit of work."[469] It was evident that this message came

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[466] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 575. Freud considered the symbol of the train as death, which is not relevant to this dream because the train journey was highlighting the future development of Salesian Missions in South America.

[467] BM, vol.16, 311.

[468] *Ibid*., 312. Don Bosco narrated: "We then entered a region packed with wild animals and poisonous snakes of bizarre and horrifying shapes. They swarmed over the mountainsides and hill slopes; they blanketed the hilltops, the lakeshores, the riverbanks, the plains, the gullies, the cliffs. Some looked like dogs with wings and were extraordinarily bloated [gluttony, impurity, pride]. Others were gigantic toads eating frogs. We could see certain lairs full of animals different in shape from ours. All three species of animals were mixed together and snarled dully as though about to devour each other. We could also see tigers, hyenas, lions, but they were not the same as those of Asia and Africa. My companion then spoke to me. Pointing out those animals to me, he exclaimed, 'The Salesians will tame them!'" Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 503. De Vries described the symbol of snakes as the sublimation of personality, and the unconscious in a more primitive and instinctual stage. Jung claimed the symbol of snakes as the mysterious numen in regard to mothers. Cf. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 342-343. Cirlot stated that the tiger is a symbol of wrath and cruelty. Cf. De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 319. De Vries considered that the symbol of hyenas signifies foxes. Cf. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 190. Jung claimed that the lion, in its wild state, is broadly speaking an index of latent passions; it may also take the form of a sign indicating the danger of being devoured by the unconscious.

In this dream, the symbol of animals was understood as a transformation from wildness to tameness upon Salesians' care in accordance with the meaning in Don Bosco's First Dream in 1824 or 1825 and in his Another Dream in 1844.

[469] BM, vol.16, 305.

through Divine Providence, urging Don Bosco and the Salesians to take action because "thousands and millions of people are awaiting your help, *waiting for the faith*."[470] The imagery of missionaries' sweat and blood ties directly to the primary purpose of missionary work: spreading the Good News of Christ and baptizing people, as reflected in Louis' message in the dream. This mission was pleasing to the Master of Life, as Louis emphasized,[471] and he predicted that the success of the mission would occur before the end of the Salesian missionaries' second generation in South America.[472]

Consequently, this evangelization and mission was a way to grow in faith, symbolized by the figs mentioned in the dream. This imagery harmonizes with the Gospel of St. John 15:5, which refers to Jesus as the "True Vine."[473] Don Bosco commented that, as a result of this mission, many savages would come to trust in and follow Jesus Christ. This dream was clearly a call to evangelization, inspiring openness to God and fostering a personal and spiritual relationship with Him for the sake of growth in faith and holiness.

8.1.4 The Consequences

At the conclusion of St. John Bosco's sharing on September 4, 1883, he stated:

> The Salesians will draw the people of (South) America to Jesus Christ by the sweetness of St. Francis de Sales. It will be a most difficult task to teach the savages a moral way of life, but their children will easily yield to the words of the missionaries and live in towns with them; civilization will supplant savagery, and thus many Indians will enter the flock of Jesus Christ.[474]

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[470] *Ibid*., 307.

[471] *Ibid*.

[472] *Ibid.*

[473] *Ibid.*, 312.

[474] *Ibid.*

This served as an encouragement to the Salesians to practice the virtues of their patron saint, St. Francis de Sales, while dedicating themselves to missionary work. Don Bosco emphasized that the key to successful missions lay in caring for children and providing them with religious education.

Later, Don Bosco critically reviewed Fr. Lemoyne's recordings and made additions and modifications to them.[475] From this analysis, it is evident that Don Bosco was deeply concerned about the progress and effectiveness of the Salesian Missions in South America during that period.

8.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

As Louis spoke in this dream, he declared that, in God's name, a bit of work was to be entrusted to the Salesians. This invocation of God's name strongly reflected His initiative and will, particularly in relation to Divine guidance. Several generations of Salesians were inspired and motivated to carry out the tasks described in this dream, with the ultimate aim of glorifying and pleasing God.[476] This inspirational message underscored that the success of the Salesian Missions depended not only on the hard work and sacrifices of the missionaries but also on their faithful adherence to God's will. In other words, Salesian missionary works are divine projects undertaken with the purpose of evangelization. The Salesians are called to sacrifice themselves in order to fulfill God's works and align with His will—an essential lesson inspired by this dream.

The virtues of gentleness and patience, as exemplified by St. Francis de Sales, were another significant element of the dream.[477] Don Bosco recounted these virtues

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[475] *Ibid.*

[476] Cf. C, 22. Personal vocation of the Salesian: "Each one of us is called by God to form part of the Salesian Society. Because of this God gives him personal gifts, and by faithful correspondence he finds his way to complete fulfillment in Christ……"

[477] Cf. C, 9. Patrons and Protectors of our Society: "……Don Bosco entrusted our Society in a special

after narrating the dream. Consequently, practicing the virtues of their patron saint has become a cornerstone of success for the Salesian Missions.

Catechesis and religious education also emerged as significant themes in this dream. Young Colle mentioned that many people were waiting for the help of the Salesians and for the formation of their faith to follow Jesus Christ and receive His Gospel. Thus, these educational strategies have been utilized to nurture faith and prepare individuals to attain salvation. In other words, these spiritual elements are not only meant for missionaries but are also a call for all Salesians to embody missionary zeal in both their lives and their works.

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way to Mary, whom he made its principal patroness, as well as to St. Joseph and to St. Francis de Sales, the zealous pastor and doctor of charity……"

9. The Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887[478]

Don Bosco had this dream, consisting of two parts, on the nights of January 3 and 4, 1887.[479] It seemed that Don Bosco was in the novitiate house of Foglizzo,[480] though the exact venue of this dream was not specified by him.[481] The handmaid of the Lord was the key figure in both parts of this dream, relating to the mission of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Help of Christians and the protector of the Salesian Society.[482]

In the first part of the dream, a person adorned with brilliant ornaments, surrounded by some people, approached Don Bosco. The person who appeared to be their guide spoke with him. This person was the humble handmaid of the Lord, who had been sent to heal the young Louis Olive.[483] In the second part of the dream, the Lord's handmaid continued her speech, expressing her maternal love and concern for her children's spiritual health. She reprimanded poor Confessions and inappropriate

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[478] BM, vol.18, 211-214.

[479] *Ibid.*, 211.

[480] *Ibid.*, 205-206. The Salesian novitiate community was moved to Foglizzo on 14 October 1886, which was a large rural community some six kilometers from San Benigno.

[481] Romero, *I Sogni Di Don Bosco*, 95.

[482] *Ibid.*, 97.

[483] BM, vol.18, 211. "I do not know whether I was awake or asleep. I did not even notice the room or house I was in, when an extraordinary light began to lighten up the place.

"After some kind of prolonged noise, I saw a person appear who was surrounded by many, many other people and moving towards me. The people and the ornaments they wore were so brilliant that any other light became like darkness, to the point that it was impossible to keep one's eyes upon any of those present.

Then the person who seemed to be the guide for the others advanced a little and began to speak as follows: *Ego sum humilis ancillia quam Dominus misit ad sanadum Ludovicum tuum infirmum. 'Ad requiem ille iam erat vocatus; nunc vero ut gloria Dei manifestetur in eo, ipse animae suae et suorum curam adhuc habebit. Ego sum ancilla cui fecit magna qui potens est et sanctum nomen eius. Hoc diligenter perpende et quod futurum est intelliges. Amen.* ('I am the lowly handmaid [cf. Lk 1:48] whom the Lord has sent to heal your ailing Louis. He had already been summoned to his rest, but now, so that the glory of God may be manifest in him, he must give thought to his soul and the souls of his family. I am the handmaid for whom great things were done by Him who is mighty, and holy is His name [cf. Lk 1:49]. Reflect carefully on this, and you will understand what has to happen.' Amen.)'

At these words the dwelling returned to its former darkness, and all night long I hovered between waking and sleeping, but drained of strength and dazed. In the morning I hastened to get news of young Louis Olive, and I was assured that he had undergone a genuine turn for the better after a restful night. Amen."

speech while encouraging good behavior and proper conduct.[484]

9.1 The Analysis of the Dream

9.1.1 The Significant Persons or Events Related to the Dream

Louis Olive and his father from Marseilles, France, were significant to this dream to a certain degree. At the age of 19, young Olive[485] had become seriously ill with typhoid fever in December 1886.[486] Fr. Paul Albera and Louis's father were informed to visit him.[487] According to the account of Fr. Ceria, Louis's father remained strong in faith, even though his daughter, Claire, had also fallen seriously ill on December 9 of the same year. However, she recovered after wearing Don Bosco's biretta, which was kept in their house.[488]

After his arrival, Louis' father was invited to have dinner with Don Bosco, and the Saint prophesied that Louis would likewise fully recover.[489] This incident

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[484] *Ibid*., 212. The next night Don Bosco saw the same apparition again. Speaking in Latin, she gave him several admonitions for the benefit of the Congregation and the boys. The continuation of the words of her who called herself the Lord's handmaid:

"I dwell in the highest heaven, that I might enrich those who love me and fill them with treasures. The treasures of adolescents are chaste words and actions. Therefore, you ministers of God, cry out, never cease crying out: 'Avoid ill-omened groups, specifically, dirty talk. Dirty talk corrupts good morals [cf. 1 Cor 15:33]'. With the greatest difficulty are they corrected who indulge in idle and scurrilous words. If you wish to do something very pleasing to me, carry on good conversations among yourselves, and give one another the example of good deeds. Many of you promise flowers yet offer only thorns to me and my Son.

Why do you so often confess your sins, while your hearts are always far away from me? Speak and do what is right, night what is bad. I am a Mother and I love my children, and I abhor their sins. I will come to you again to lead some of you to true rest with me. I shall look after them even as a hen protects her chicks [cf. Mt 23:37].

You artisans, manufacture good deeds, not wickedness. Dirty talk is a plague circulating among you. You who are called to administer the Lord's heritage, cry out, never grow tired of crying out, until he comes to summon you to render an account of your stewardship [cf. Lk 16:2]. It is my delight to be with the children of men [cf. Pr 8:31]. But time is short; so have courage while you have time."

[485] Louis (Ludovico) Olive (1867-1919) took his profession in 1888, and he joined in the first expedition of Salesian missionaries to China in 1906. His Chinese name is 賀道行神父. He died on 18 September 1919, at Canton at the age of 52. His family was one of the benefactors of Don Bosco's works.

[486] BM, vol.18, 210.

[487] *Ibid*. Fr. Paul Albera (1844-1921) was the provincial in France, the French novices' superior, and the Rector Major in 1910-1921.

[488] *Ibid*.

[489] *Ibid*., 211. Don Bosco said: "We shall drink a toast in Marseilles when Louis will be fully recovered

involving the family was one of the significant factors associated with the dream.

A traditional novitiate house was established in Foglizzo following the decision of the Fourth General Chapter in September 1886.[490] This decision meant that novices were now separated from pupils and professed confreres. Additionally, the school at Valsalice became a major Salesian formation center for many years, serving philosophy students starting in 1887.[491] These significant historical developments for the Salesian Society had a certain influence on Don Bosco's dream.

9.1.2 Analyzing Through the Lens of Spiritual Theology

In this dream, the appearance of the lowly handmaid was connected to themes of God's initiative and guidance. She expressed this divine purpose when she said: "I dwell in the highest heaven, that I might enrich those who love me and fill them with treasures."[492] The lowly handmaid conveyed messages regarding the recovery of the novice Louis and reminded the boys in the oratory about the importance of chaste words and actions. She affirmed that the healing of Louis served to manifest God's glory, declaring: "I am the handmaid for whom great things were done by Him who is mighty, and holy is His name."[493] This aspect of the dream clearly underscores the focus on seeking the glory of God.

The Lord's handmaid also promised to grant treasures to those who loved her, indicating that the treasures for adolescents were chaste words and actions. At the same time, she criticized some of the youth, saying: "Many of you promise flowers yet offer only thorns to me and my Son,"[494] and "speak and do what is right, not what

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and seated at the head of the table."

[490] DBHS, vol. 5, 377.

[491] *Ibid.*, 81.

[492] BM, vol.18, 211.

[493] *Ibid.*

[494] *Ibid.*, 212.

is bad."[495] These remarks served as a call to the boys to reflect on their motivations, encouraging them to pursue personal and spiritual perfection in God. The handmaid further urged those entrusted with spiritual leadership, saying: "You who are called to administer the Lord's heritage, cry out, never grow tired of crying out, until He comes to summon you to render an account of your stewardship."[496] This statement carried a strong sense of responsibility and motivation to fulfill the Divine will.

After the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887, Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne felt a deep sense of excitement during their dialogue, as the dream conveyed hope regarding the recovery of Louis. This was especially significant since the doctors had already given up on him, declaring that he would not survive.[497] The dream was a manifestation of the liberty of the Spirit and filled the atmosphere with joy and faith.

9.1.3 Analyzing Through Kelsey's Perspective

Regarding personal issues, the Salesian formation was the primary concern of St. John Bosco in his old age to ensure the continuity of the congregation, as mentioned above. However, the expansion of the Salesian Society was another pressing concern for Don Bosco. For example, the construction of the Church and hospice of the Sacred Heart of Jesus posed great challenges to him. Similarly, the establishment of Salesian houses in Trent, Concepción of Chile, London-Battersea, and Quito of Ecuador became heavy burdens for him.[498]

During this period of expansion, Don Bosco was in poor health. At the solemn inauguration of the house in Foglizzo, he was no longer able to stand firmly on his

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[495] *Ibid.*

[496] *Ibid.*

[497] *Ibid.*, 213.

[498] DBHS, vol. 5, 382.

feet and appeared visibly tired.[499] Nevertheless, he still exerted all his effort to animate his congregation and always kept his spiritual sons in his mind. These factors influenced the dream to some extent. They reflected Don Bosco's deep concern for the spiritual well-being of his sons. Furthermore, his concern regarding the conduct and spiritual welfare of the boys in the oratory surfaced indirectly in this dream, especially with reference to the artisans. This concern was possibly related to Don Bosco's daily observations and interactions with the Salesians and the boys in the oratory.

From the perspective of extrasensory perception, this dream can be viewed as an instance of telepathy, as the lowly handmaid mentioned the current spiritual state of the boys in the oratory during the second part of the dream.[500] This information pertained to the thoughts, feelings, or activities of others. The dream could also be considered an example of clairvoyance, as it referred to the novice Louis's illness and recovery, a contemporary physical event mentioned in the first part of the dream.[501] Don Bosco appeared to derive this information directly from the character within the dream.

Regarding the correlation between the dream content and reality, a few symbols were presented in these two short apparitions, but the related messages were deeply rooted in biblical meaning. In the first part,[502] the figure of a person adorned with brilliant ornaments and surrounded by others appeared. Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne identified this figure as Our Lady.[503] This figure also appeared in Don Bosco's First Dream in 1824 or 1825 and in Another Dream in 1844.

Furthermore, this character served as a guide or interpreter in those dreams, as

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499 BM, vol.18, 206-207.

500 *Ibid.*, 212.

501 *Ibid.*, 211.

502 *Ibid*.

503 *Ibid.*, 213.

well as in this dream. The role of guide or interpreter was similarly portrayed in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881, the Provera Dream in 1883, and the Dream about the South American Missions in 1883.

In the first part of this dream, the character of the lowly handmaid of the Lord was connected to "the low estate of his handmaiden" as described in the Gospel of St. Luke 1:48: "For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." This figure symbolized the image of Mary, Help of Christians, because in the dream, this character declared that she was sent to heal the ailing Louis.[504] She also stated: "I am the handmaid for whom great things were done by Him who is mighty, and holy is His name."[505] This echoes the Gospel of St. Luke 1:49: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

De Vries affirmed that the symbol of the handmaid implicates the Virgin Mary, in alignment with the Gospel of St. Luke 1:38.[506] Additionally, Jung associated the symbol of a woman with figures such as Eve, Helen, Sophia, or Mary, relating them to impulsive, emotional, intellectual, and moral ideas, respectively.[507] While this

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[504] Cf. John O'Connell, "Our Lady, Help of Christians," *Catholic Culture*, accessed 24 March 2020, https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=5976. Mary's title Help of Christians is one of the invocations in the well-known Litany of Loretto (also known as the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary). Pope St. Pius V inserted the title of Help of Christians in the litany in 1571 in thanksgiving to Our Lady for the victory of the inferior Christian fleet over the Muslim Turks at the Battle of Lepanto. In 1624, the Catholics of Passau, Bavaria enshrined a picture of Mary Help of Christians from the 15th century in a newly built Shrine to Mary Help of Christians. Pilgrims to the Shrine traditionally uttered the aspiration: *Maria, hilf* (Mary, help). Centuries later Pope Pius VII, held captive by Napoleon's forces at Savona, organized a Rosary Novena among the faithful to Our Lady Help of Christians for his liberation. In 1815, Pius VII established the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians in gratitude for his release from captivity.

[505] BM, vol.18, 211.

[506] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 284. "Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'" (Lk 1:38).

[507] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 375-376. The woman is an archetypal image of great complexity in which the decisive factor may be the superimposed symbolic aspects–for example, the superior aspects

interpretation aligns with certain elements of the dream, it is applicable only to some extent. Furthermore, the imagery of a lowly handmaid and the symbols of light and darkness emerged in the dream. These same symbols were also present in the Message to Pius IX in 1873 and in the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881.

In the second part of the dream,[508] the Lord's handmaid reappeared, explicitly identified as the Blessed Virgin Mary by Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne. She emphasized the importance of virtues, particularly chastity, and declared: "The treasures of adolescents are chaste words and actions."[509] She also lamented: "Many of you promise flowers yet offer only thorns to me and my Son,"[510] calling for a deeper commitment to moral and spiritual purity

The image of flowers symbolized the Virgin Mary's purity and virtues, as interpreted by Philip Kosloski,[511] and similar associations were made in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876.[512] It seems likely that the symbolism of flowers representing virtues and spiritual offerings was commonly understood within the Salesian Society. In this

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of woman as Sophia or Mary determine her function as a personification of science or of supreme virtue; and when presented as an image of the anima, she is superior to the man because she is a reflection of the loftiest and purest qualities of the man.

[508] BM, vol.18, 212.

[509] *Ibid.*

[510] *Ibid.*

[511] See Philip Kosloski, "5 Flowers Connected to the Virgin Mary," *Aleteia*, 15 August 2017, assessed 27 May 2019, https://aleteia.org/2017/08/15/5-flowers-connected-to-the-virgin-mary/. The lily symbolizes purity, innocence and virginity. The Archangel Gabriel is often depicted in scenes of the Annunciation giving Mary a lily. Additionally, there is a white day lily that only blooms around the time of the Assumption in mid-August and is known as the "Assumption Lily" (though it is actually a variation of a hosta). The rose is sometimes used to represent heavenly joy when worn as a crown by saints, while its thorns often point to Original Sin. The Blessed Virgin Mary is called the "rose without thorns." Mary has also been given the title of "Mystical Rose." The Rosary is sometimes visually represented in art as a garland of roses given to Mary. The iris is sometimes called the "sword lily," and for this reason was used most often in connection with Our Lady of Sorrows. The periwinkle is also named the "Virgin Flower" and its blue color connects it to Mary, who is usually depicted wearing blue. Originally referred to as "Our Lady's Slipper," this flower has a popular legend that says they first sprang forth at the touch of Mary's foot. See also Ronnberg, ed., *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*, 150. Ronnberg explained that flowers are incorporated into ritual and sacrament the world over, as emblems of eros, beauty, perfection, purity, fertility, joy and resurrection.

[512] BM, vol. 12, 437-438.

dream, the thorns referenced by the handmaid signified inappropriate talk, wickedness, misbehavior, and sin. This misbehavior was likened to a plague circulating in oratories and schools.[513] The symbol of thorns also appeared in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879 and in the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881. However, while thorns in the earlier dreams symbolized difficulties,[514] in this dream, they specifically represented moral shortcomings and sin, as mentioned above.

A maternal figure was also present in the dream, depicted as "a hen gathering her brood under her wings," an image that echoes the Gospel of St. Matthew 23:37.[515] This imagery was tied to the mission of the Lord's handmaid, Mary, Help of Christians,[516] a widely recognized representation for the faithful. Jung described the maternal figure as symbolic of destiny, the collective unconscious, and the nocturnal side of existence. He also noted that the maternal symbol represents the source of the water of life and is the first to embody the anima.[517] However, Jung's interpretation does not seem particularly relevant to this dream's depiction of the Lord's handmaid.

At the end of this dream, the Lord's handmaid said:

> You artisans, manufacture good deeds, not wickedness. Dirty talk is a plague circulating among you. You who are called to administer the Lord's heritage, cry out, never grow tired of crying out, until he comes to summon you to render an account of your stewardship. It is my delight to be with the children of men. But time is short; so have courage while you have

[513] *Ibid.*, vol.18, 212.

[514] See *Ibid.*, vol. 14, 90. In the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, St. Francis de Sales said: "Many roses and joys are in store, but very sharp thorns also threaten. They will cause all of you acute distress and sorrow. You must pray much." See also *Ibid.*, vol. 15, 149. Don Bosco commented on his Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881: "I also managed to ascertain that many thorns and difficulties lie immediately ahead of us, but they will be followed by great consolations."

[515] "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Mt 23:37)

[516] BM, vol.18, 212. "I am a Mother and I love my children, and I abhor their sins. I will come to you again to lead some of you to true rest with me. I shall look after them even as a hen protects her chicks [cf. Mt 23:37]."

[517] Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 218.

time.[518]

This message carried a sense of the "Last Four Things" —death, judgment, heaven, and hell—concepts that were also present in the Provera Dream in 1883. The phrase, "You who are called to administer the Lord's heritage, cry out, never grow tired of crying out, until he comes to summon you to render an account of your stewardship," appears to be connected to the Gospel of St. Luke 16:2, highlighting the themes of death and judgment.[519]

The Lord's handmaid warned that "time is short," a statement intended to encourage the boys in the oratory to value time and pursue good conduct and behavior. This warning was also meant to inspire their personal and spiritual development.

Regarding spiritual matters, the Lord's handmaid highlighted that the recovery of the novice Louis, presented in the first part of the dream, was meant to manifest Divine glory.[520] This served as a reminder for everyone to glorify God in their daily lives and to deepen their union with Him.

In the second part of the dream, her maternal concern was evident as the handmaid emphasized the importance of chaste words and actions for adolescents. She warned that if such virtues were neglected, the plague of sin would take hold.[521] This caution regarding the corruptive power of dirty talk appears to have been inspired by the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 15:33.[522]

In conclusion, the adoption of good conduct signifies the beginning of a deeper

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[518] BM, vol.18, 212.

[519] "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward'" (Lk 16:2).

[520] BM, vol.18, 211.

[521] *Ibid.*, 212.

[522] "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (1 Cor 15:33). According to the King James Version, it seems that it is much more appropriate to echo with the message of dirty talk corrupting good morals in the dream: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor 15:33).

relationship with God. Furthermore, in this dream, the Salesians were portrayed as ministers of God, entrusted with the responsibility of providing religious and moral education to adolescents. Their mission was to encourage the young to practice virtue, avoid sin, and remain open to God—ultimately guiding them toward a closer union with Him.

9.1.4 The Consequences

After the dream, Don Bosco discussed it with Fr. Lemoyne on the morning of January 5, 1887.[523] He acknowledged that the dream contained a supernatural event and vision. Following Fr. Lemoyne's suggestion, Don Bosco documented the dream in writing. Additionally, novice Louis began to recover and was able to get out of bed on January 12.

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[523] BM, vol.18, 213. "On the morning of the 5th he sent for Father Lemoyne and told him everything. Father Lemoyne has left us a record of their dialogue. After telling him what he had seen and heard, Don Bosco went on: 'And now I have sent for you that you may give me some advice. Should I let the Olive family know what I have dreamt?'

'You know that better than I do,' Father Lemoyne answered, 'Our Lady has always been so very good to you.'

'Oh yes! That is true.'

'And so many of these dreams of yours have all been fulfilled to the letter.'

'That is true.'

'So, if you will allow me, and do this I only give glory to God, I will call them visions, for indeed they are.'

'You are right.'

'Now, we have every reason to believe that this dream, too, is a supernatural event which will come true, and that Olive, although the doctors have given up on him, will recover.'

'What advice do you give, then?'

'To use a little human prudence, if you think it best, I would say that you could start circulating the rumor that Don Bosco has dreamt of Olive; that, in the dream, he felt that there was reason for high hopes.'

'Well, we can do that.'

'But, Don Bosco, please do me this favor: write this dream down. I know that you have difficulty writing, but it concerns Our Lady. If this comes true, there you have proof of Mary's maternal goodness.'

'Well, I shall write it, then.'

He then wrote what we have already reported above.

We feel that we should not remain silent about yet another incident. On one of those evenings, the cleric Olive who was seriously ill, had dreamt that Don Bosco had gone into his room to see him and had told him, 'Be at ease. You will come and see me in my room within ten days.'

The brightness of that dream left in that patient the conviction that Don Bosco had gone to him in person, and he refused to accept the opinion of those who denied it. He was already so much better by January 10th that his father left for France. Louis got out of bed on the 12th. On the 24th he made his appearance in the Superior Council's dining room during dinner, and the superiors welcomed him with great joy."

9.2 The Significant Elements in regard to the Dream

This dream incorporates four significant elements, both direct and indirect: First, one of the direct significant elements in this dream is the embodiment of the preventive system in educating youth.[524] The Salesians are called to be ministers of God, tasked with the responsibility of reminding the young of the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtues. By instilling these values, it becomes possible to prevent the spread of the plague of sin within Salesian schools and oratories.[525] This focus aligns with Don Bosco's letter from Rome, written on May 10, 1884,[526] which emphasized the duty of superiors and Salesians to care deeply for boys, be concerned for their salvation, and lead them to eternal rewards.[527]

Second, another direct significant element in this dream is the representation of the Marian exemplar through the figure of the Lord's handmaid. In the Gospel of St. Luke, Mary said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), and "For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Lk 1:48). Her trust in God provided a model for fulfilling Divine salvation, as highlighted in these verses. Hence, Mary is recognized as blessed by every generation. For the Salesians, as servants and ministers of God, the Marian exemplar serves as a guide to their mission. By

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[524] *Ibid*., vol. 4, 380-385. "This system (preventive system) is based entirely on reason, religion, and kindness. Therefore, it excludes all violent punishment and seeks to do away with even slight punishments……"

[525] Cf. C, 39. Assistance as an attitude and method: "The practice of the preventive system demands a fundamental disposition on our part: an empathy with the young and a willingness to be with them: 'Here in your midst I feel completely at home; for me, living means being here with you.' We are actively present among youth in brotherly friendship, helping them in their efforts to grow in what is good, and encouraging them to cast off every form of slavery, so that their weakness may not be overcome by evil……."

[526] BM, vol.17, 85-94.

[527] *Ibid.*, 91. "The superior should be always ready to listen to any doubts or complaints with all eyes to supervise their behavior and all heart to look for the temporal and spiritual good of those entrusted to him by Divine Providence."

"The assistants must look at it as their duty to report to their superiors anything that may in any way be offensive in the eyes of God that is brought to their attention."

following Mary's example, they are called to serve and educate youth in a spirit of evangelization, mirroring her trust and dedication to God's will.

Third, although not directly tied to the dream itself, the discussion between Don Bosco and Fr. Lemoyne after the dream is a significant element. This dialogue underscores the value of discerning God's will through thoughtful conversations and guidance.[528] Such exchanges reflect the collective discernment of God's will, illustrating how the Salesian charism emerges and is shaped within a group context.

Fourth, the recovery of novice Louis under Marian protection and Don Bosco's care during his novitiate presents an indirect significant element related to this dream. Later, Fr. Louis Olive became one of the first Salesian missionaries to China, spreading the Salesian charism to the Far East. This detail underscores the missionary spirit inherent in the Salesian charism, which focuses on serving youth in the spirit of Don Bosco's legacy.[529]

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[528] Cf. C, 123. Subsidiarity and decentralization: "……It is the duty of those who exercise authority to promote and guide this contribution by means of adequate information, personal dialogue and community study and reflection."

[529] Cf. C, 30. People not yet evangelized: "……We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our Congregation. Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people. This work mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism……."

10. Conclusion

The primary task of this research project has been to analyze the eight selected dreams of Don Bosco in the context of spiritual theology, using Kelsey's approach to dream interpretation. The aim was to show how Don Bosco serves as an exemplar in navigating life's contingencies, inspired by his dreams and in response to Divine will, particularly in terms of guidance and motivation. Through this analysis, it has been demonstrated that Don Bosco faced life's challenges and pursued personal and spiritual perfection in alignment with his dreams, relying on Divine providence as his guide.

From a spiritual theology perspective, it is clear that God took the initiative in communicating His messages through the role of messenger as revealed in Don Bosco's dreams. These dreams identified issues of guidance and motivation, serving to illuminate and animate Don Bosco's faith response. For example, in the Provera Dream of 1883, Fr. Provera answered Don Bosco's question regarding the Salesians:

> The Master of all masters tells us how. Get yourself a well-honed pruning knife and become a good vine-tender. Lop off the branches that are dead or useless. Then the vine will be vigorous and will bear abundant fruit; what's more important, it will continue to be fruitful for a long time.[530]

This statement emphasizes the theme of guidance, represented by the image of the "Master of all masters." In this dream, Fr. Provera served as a channel for a Divine message directed toward Don Bosco. Moreover, Fr. Provera's explanation addressed the issue of motivation, symbolized by the metaphor of a "good vine-tender" wielding a well-honed pruning knife. This imagery reflects the discipline required of Salesians and the stringent standards for entry into the Salesian Society.

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[530] MB, vol. 16, 4.

The metaphor called upon Don Bosco to nurture the spiritual growth of the Salesians in alignment with Divine will. This spiritual fruit was closely tied to the pursuit of God's glory through faith. Fr. Provera's prophecy of enduring fruitfulness likely brought Don Bosco great joy and resonated with the liberty of the Spirit, which is inherently connected to joy.

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Don Bosco's dreams serve as sacred gifts and guidance from the Holy Spirit, directing the growth of the religious lives of the Salesians and their distinctive charism while navigating the interplay between guidance and motivation in response to Divine providence.

In accordance with Kelsey's approach, it is affirmed that the eight dreams of Don Bosco possessed elements of extrasensory perception. For example, the Dream in Lanzo of 1876 included three specific lists bearing the names of boys, which symbolized the spiritual states of these souls. Likewise, certain dreams foreshadowed future events, such as the prophecy of the Salesian Missions in the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883. These instances of extrasensory perception highlight God's presence and His direct communication to Don Bosco, urging him to fulfill the Divine will and uphold his mission for needy youth. Furthermore, the contents of these selected dreams of Don Bosco reflected his own life experiences, such as the illness of novice Louis Olive in the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887.

The sanctity of deceased individuals who appeared in Don Bosco's dreams—such as St. Dominic Savio, Fr. Provera, and Louis Colle—was highly esteemed. Don Bosco likely desired for the Salesians to emulate the exemplary virtues of these figures, a notion that connects with Kelsey's theory that dreamers often share traits with the people who appear in their dreams.

Kelsey also posited that dreams incorporate archetypal symbols.[531] In Don Bosco's dreams, recurrent symbols—such as banners, garments, and gardens—matched interpretations found in dictionaries recommended by Kelsey. For instance, in the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887, the image of the

[531] Cf. Stephen Happel, "Symbol," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, & Dermot A. Lane (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 996-1002. Stephen Happel argued that symbols are produced by the imagination, which are understood to indicate more than one meaning. This idea is in harmony with Kelsey's approach that a dream is a collection of a vivid series of images, and those images or symbols have more than one meaning due to their variety. Certainly, this concept is applicable to Don Bosco's dreams, for example, the symbol of thorns in the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887 has a different meaning apart from the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879 and the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881.

Happel stated that a symbol is a complex of gestures, sounds, images, and/or words that evoke, invite, and persuade participation in what they refer. Symbols, such as darkness and light, water or oil, emerge from the drama of human experience and enjoy cross-cultural power. This is similar to Kelsey's theory that dreams occur because of the happening from yesterday and forgotten elements. Also, Kelsey claimed a similar idea that reviewing images in dreams in relation to one's experience and memory. For example, the symbol of wild animals in Don Bosco's First Dream (nine or ten years old) in 1824 or 1825, which are familiar objects in the peasant boys' daily life in Piedmont.

Happel elaborated that a comparison of symbols across temporal and geographical distances indicates similarities, even identities, that cannot be explained by oral, literary, or ritual influences. Some would claim that the similarities have their origin in a common psychological unconscious shared by all human beings. Symbols constantly convey a surplus of meaning. Their versatility as carriers of meaning makes it impossible to say that they have a one-to-one correspondence with their referents. Kelsey had a similar presentation of archetypal symbols that almost all people are able to identify symbols in dreams and they carry a universal meaning in addition to a personal one, for example, an automobile, a car, an unknown person, a lamb, a horse, a dog, a large mountain lion, a house, a shadow, and so forth. Symbols describe realities that influence the human psyche. For example, in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876 and the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887, the symbol of flowers indicates beauty, goodness, virtues, and so forth.

Happel claimed that religious symbols, that work the way metaphors do, awaken in participants an encounter with an ultimate Other at the limits of human existence. Religious value is not added to the symbol as though propositional doctrines were aggregated to an already established clear statement. This is echoing Kelsey's assumptions for the Christian interpretation of dreams that God is willing to communicate with humans. For instance, in the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883, Louis Colle played a role as the Divine messenger to deliver Divine messages to Don Bosco, just as Louis said: "I would like in God's name to give you a bit of work." This explicitly manifested Divine communication by a figure of a deceased person in that dream.

Happel explained that the literary and oral forms of symbols (lyrics, stories, laws, visions, etc.) form the basis for theologies of revelation. Recognizing that Divine revelation comes to us first through the scriptural texts, authors analyze the modes of Divine communication. Kelsey also stated that God is always present, not only in the physical world, but also in the spiritual world, which constantly breaks through into our consciousness by dreams and visions, for example, the symbol of ten diamonds in the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881 with vivid meanings inspired by Scripture. Those symbols were Salesians' implementation in their spiritual life requested by Divine communication in this Don Bosco's dream.

Happel admitted that symbols not only reflect social systems; they change them. Contemporary theologians are aware that through Christian symbols they cannot simply scold the world for not living up to its ideals, but they must also propose alternate symbolic modes of expression that can heal human pain and redirect human desires. This is similar to Kelsey's assumptions for the Christian interpretation of dreams that humans can directly be confronted by the spiritual world and have a related experience, for instance, the symbol of the Marian banner in the Prophecy in 1870, in the Message to Pius IX in 1873, and in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879. These dreams implicated explicitly to the Marian aid in order to urge humans to pursue personal and spiritual perfection.

"handmaid was interpreted by De Vries as representing the Virgin Mary, based on the Gospel of St. Luke 1:38.[532] This interpretation was relevant to the dream in a certain sense. Furthermore, the repetition of specific symbols is a notable feature of Don Bosco's dreams. For example, the banner appears in the Prophecy of 1870, the Message to Pius IX in 1873, and the Dream about Future Salesian Vocations in 1879. Similarly, the symbol of a garment features prominently in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881, and the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883 The garden motif appears in both the Dream in Lanzo in 1876 and the Dream about Future Salesian Vocations in 1879.

This recurrence of symbols echoes Kelsey's insight that paying attention to repetitions is crucial in the interpretation of Christian dreams, as these dreams often hold profound meaning. Certainly, the symbols in Don Bosco's dreams served as channels of Divine communication and carried meanings that were not always aligned with standard symbolic interpretations. This corresponds with Kelsey's assertion that God provides guidance through dreams to those who are receptive and open to Divine communication.

Furthermore, this openness to God is closely tied to an individual's relationship with Him. Don Bosco exemplified this openness in the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883, where he proclaimed: "I thanked Divine Providence for graciously using me as an instrument of His divine glory and the salvation of so many souls."[533] This profound relationship with God underscores the spiritual foundation of

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[532] De Vries et al., *Elsevier's Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 284. "Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'" (Lk 1:38).

[533] MB, vol. 16, 311. Cf. Michael Mendl, "The Dreams of Don Bosco: An Introduction to Their Study," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 12, no. 2 (2004): 321–58, 324 & 326. Usually, Don Bosco replied to the inquiry about his dreams: "*Otis botis pia tutis*," this magical formula was nothing but semi-Latinate gibberish. this was a meaningless phrase that Don Bosco often used to evade embarrassing questions. In addition, he asked his audiences not to spread his dreams out of the oratory

the Christian interpretation of dreams, as framed by Kelsey's approach.

From the analysis of Don Bosco's dreams, significant themes emerged to inspire imitation of Don Bosco and continuation of his charism today. Serving needy youth remains the central mission of the Salesians, requiring sacrifice and the virtues of gentleness and patience, as exemplified by St. Francis de Sales. These ideals are especially emphasized in the First Dream (nine or ten years old) in 1824 or 1825 and in the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883. These teachings align with Don Bosco's motto: *Da Mihi Animas, Caetera Tolle*,[534] highlighting the integration of Don Bosco's preventive system of education in service to youth.

The Salesian model of education and ministry emphasizes guiding young people to understand the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue. This aim is clearly reflected in the First Dream (nine or ten years old) in 1824 or 1825, the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, and the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887. Salesians must embody these virtues as role models for youth, as outlined in the Dream about the Future Salesian Vocations in 1879, in the Dream in San Benigno Canavese in 1881, and in the Provera Dream in 1883.

Salesian catechesis and education follow a communal approach, focusing on guiding youth toward becoming mature Christians with Marian guidance. This approach is evident in the Dream in Lanzo in 1876, the Dream about the South

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and to advise them to take the benefit of their souls from the dreams.

See also DS, 1859. In the "Tridentine Rules" for the Prohibition of Books, confirmed in the Constitution *Dominici gregis custodiae*, 24 March 1564, rule 9: "All books and writings concerning geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, pyromancy, oneiromancy, chiromancy, necromancy, or which contain sortilege, potions, auguries, omens, or magic spells occur, are altogether condemned. Bishops should also diligently take care that books, treatises, or indexes of astrological forecasts are not read or possessed that dare to affirm that something is certainly going to take place relating to future contingent happenings or to fortuitous events or to actions that depend upon the human will." This is a possible reason why Don Bosco was asking his spiritual sons and students to keep his sharing about his dreams low profile.

[534] MB, vol. 5, 81. In 1854, after St. Dominic Savio saw the poster containing the motto, *Da Mihi Animas, Caetera Tolle,* in Don Bosco's room, he said: "Oh, I see! Here you're not concerned with money, but with souls. I hope you'll be concerned with mine too!"

America Missions in 1883, and the Dream of the Handmaid of the Lord in 1887. Salesian apostolic work is conducted in a family spirit, fostering group sanctification, closeness to God, and deep friendships between Salesians and youth. Dreams such as the Another Dream in 1844 and the Dream about the South America Missions in 1883 underline this approach. Ultimately, Salesians are called to be Divine signs—as educators and missionaries to needy youth—continuing Don Bosco's legacy.

In conclusion, imitating Don Bosco's example and drawing inspiration from his dreams requires Salesians to embody humility, strength, and energy. These values were highlighted in Don Bosco's First Dream in 1824 or 1825. Andrea Bozzolo interprets these qualities as encompassing strength of spirit, character, and body,[535] resonating with Don Bosco's vision of the "Healthy, Wise, Saintly Salesian Priest."[536] Don Bosco likely envisioned his spiritual sons as possessing these attributes to serve as fathers and educators of youth.[537]

In his spiritual testament, Don Bosco professed: "Our Congregation has a happy future ahead, for it has been prepared by Divine Providence, and its glory shall be lasting for us as long as our rules shall be faithfully observed."[538] Under the protection of Mary, Help of Christians, St. Joseph, and St. Francis de Sales, Salesians remain faithful to Divine mercy, the Church, and Don Bosco's charism. They strive for personal and spiritual perfection, living as spiritual fathers and role models for needy youth. Don Bosco's dreams continue to inspire us to carry on his charism and

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[535] Bozzolo, *Don Bosco's Childhood Dream: Theological Reading*, 78. Fr. Andrea Bozzolo is a Salesian priest with a doctorate in Classics and Theology. He teaches dogmatic theology at the Pontifical Salesian University, where he has also been Rector since 2021. He was an expert at the Synod on Youth and the Synod on Synodality.

[536] BM, vol. 16, 2. "*Sano, Sapiente, Santo Sacerdote Salesiano*."

[537] Egidio Viganò, "Saint John Bosco: '*Iuventutis Pater et Magister*,'" Salesians Don Bosco, accessed 20 October 2021, https://www.sdb.org/en/RM_Resources/Letters_AGC/Fr_Vigano/_SAINT_JOHN_BOSCO_IUVENTUTIS_P.

[538] BM, vol. 17, 249-250.

fulfill his mission of serving and evangelizing vulnerable youth in today's world.[539]

[539] Ángel Fernández Artime, "The Dream That Makes You Dream: A Heart That Transforms 'Wolves' into 'Lambs,'" Salesiani Don Bosco, July 28, 2023, https://www.sdb.org/it/Rettor_Maggiore/Strenna/Strenna_2024. Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime is the current Rector Major of the Salesian Society, and he has been made a cardinal on 30 September 2023 by Pope Francis.

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